SAT. SPECIAL / D1

Why Jan Nieto has XYZ factor

METRO / A17

Court battle looms between DPWH, Makati gov't over electronic billboard

SPORTS / A23

Filipinos rule world pool, says Billiards Digest

BUSINESS / B1

OFW remittances hit all-time high of $14B in 2006

WORLD / A20

Bush authorizes killing Iranians in Iraq

HK maids to hold protest rally over new restrictions

By Daisy C. L. Mandap
Contributor

HONG KONG—ASSOCIATIONS OF FILIPINO workers here are gathering their forces for a big rally in front of the Philippine Embassy in Central district on Sunday to protest new overseas employment regulations which they say will only lead to loss of jobs for a big number of domestic helpers.

HK MAIDS/ A8

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Saturday, January 27, 2007 ★★ 5 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 50 P18 website: www.inquirer.net

Abalos: Computerization of poll still impossible

By Jerome Aning and TJ Burgonio

"OPERATIONALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO IMPLEment," a defiant Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. said yesterday of the proposed poll automation in selected areas during the May elections.

"I'd rather go to jail than be forced to implement

ABALOS/ A6

'Team Unity' shaping up

Atong deal kept secret for security reasons

By Norman Bordadora

SPECIAL PROSECUTOR DENNIS Villa-Ignacio yesterday said it was important for government prosecutors and the lawyers of Charlie "Atong" Ang to keep their plea bargain agreement under wraps until it was presented to the Sandiganbayan.

Reacting to the complaint on Thursday of Rene Saguisag, deposed President Joseph Estrada's lead counsel in his plunder case, that the defense team was not even provided a copy of the proposed deal, Villa-Ignacio said there was a strict agreement of confidentiality regarding the matter.

"There were security considerations," he told the INQUIRER.

The proposed deal would have Ang implicating Estrada, his principal co-accused and former gambling buddy, in exchange for being allowed to plead guilty to corruption of a public official and evade a trial for plunder.

Villa-Ignacio said there was no treachery on the part of the prosecutors in the plunder case as well as Ang's lawyers because copies of the plea bargain agreement became readily available to Estrada's lawyers after it was submitted to the Sandiganbayan for disposition.

"As [Associate Justice Francisco Villaruz] said, the defense can readily get a copy of the deal because upon its sub-

ATONG/ A6

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM
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PCPO/MALACAÑANG PHOTO

ON ARRIVAL at the congress venue in Davos, Switzerland, President Arroyo is escorted by Hans Schwab (left) director of Sicpa, the leading provider of security inks and solutions for most of the world's bank notes. He's also the nephew of World Economic Forum founding chair Klaus Schwab.

GMA bats for Asean as major trading bloc

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

DAVOS, SWITZERLAND (via PLDT)—The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) is ready to take its place among the world's major trading blocs as its members forge stronger political, economic and security ties.

"It is time for Asia to stand up and be counted," President Macapagal-Arroyo said in discussions she held yesterday on the theme of "Asean's Economic Roadmap" with some 80 representatives of major international financial players and multilateral lending agencies at the World Economic Forum in this Swiss ski resort.

"At a time of uncertainty in the world, I am proud that Asean is taking a bold step forward rather than a timid step back by committing to establish an Asean charter," said Ms Arroyo, who spoke for the 10-nation grouping which is chaired this year by the Philippines.

In its 12th Summit of Leaders held in Cebu earlier this month, Asean leaders agreed to draw up a charter, the first ever for a group that in the past acted on informal consensus. The charter will provide an institutional framework for the further expansion of trade and create a formidable trading bloc.

The economic roadmap will end with the formation of a single market and production base with free movement of goods, services, skilled labor and invest-

GMA BATS/ A9

Opposition bets likely in GMA Senate list

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Christine O. Avendaño and Michael Lim Ubac

WITH THE OPPOSITION cracking apart, President Macapagal-Arroyo is moving to gain the upper hand in the May elections by forming a "unity ticket" that would take in reelectionists, senators making a comeback and young guns, amid warnings from loyal allies against "Trojan horses."

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor said yesterday he believed that whatever wounds had been inflicted on Ms Arroyo by former opposition Senators Vicente Sotto III and Tessie Aquino-Oreta "were not deep enough to prevent a reconciliation."

Defensor told the INQUIRER the administration slate was likely to be bannered by reelectionist Senators Joker Arroyo and Ralph Recto; the comebacking Sotto and Oreta, and the young guns of the historic 11th Congress (which voted to impeach President Joseph Estrada), like Tarlac Rep. Gilbert Teodoro, Bukidnon Rep. Miguel Zubiri and he (Defensor) himself.

Defensor said that Sotto and Oreta were oppositionists with moderate or centrist views compared to "the other faces in the opposition."

He said their inclusion in an administration slate would be a big step toward reconciliation.

A top Malacañang official, who requested anonymity, said the administration coalition—Lakas-CMD, Kampi and NPC—had even adopted a tentative campaign slogan, "Team Unity: Tulong-Tulong Sa Pag-Sulong," which reflected the direction Ms Arroyo was tak-

TEAM UNITY/ A8

Bright lights, live bands now perk up nights in Jolo

JOLO, SULU—A FEW YEARS ago, what Noraida and her high school friends do would be unthinkable—going out at night in this capital town, the bastion of the extremist group Abu Sayyaf.

Now, the provincial capitol building is flooded with green, blue, yellow and red lights each night. Scores of people visit its grounds, which have been transformed into a park.

"We are having fun here every night. This has become a favorite hangout for teenagers," Noraida said as she shared roast chicken with three friends at an open-air restaurant near the capitol grounds.

There was little to differentiate the 17-year-old from any other teenager in the Philippines—she was wearing jeans and a T-shirt and giggled incessantly while talking.

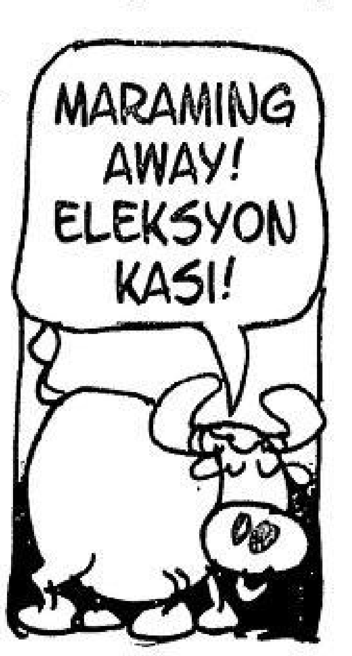
"We couldn't go out late at night before because of the curfew, but things have started to change since the US soldiers started arriving," she said.

Abu Sayyaf fighters, who have taken refuge on the Muslim-dominated island of Jolo for years, have been pushed back into the hills since US troops arrived in 2002 to help train their Philippine counterparts and provide intelligence.

Since then, the situation in Jolo has improved hugely, residents say. A night curfew has been lifted and there is a buzz as commerce flourishes and fear dissipates.

BRIGHT LIGHTS/ A6

Quarrelsome star hangs over pols in year of the pig


MARAMING AWAY! ELEKSYON KASI!

By Nikko Dizon

IN THE YEAR OF THE FIRE pig, it will not rain lechon.

But there is a quarrelsome star in the horizon and patriarchs—commonly known as politicians and leaders of the world—will be affected, according to feng shui master, Lillian Too.

"This year, all men, especially those in patriarchal positions, will be affected by the quarrelsome star. They will be caught in misunderstandings," said Too in a brief arrival press conference yesterday at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia).

QUARRELSOME/ A6

Inquirer, GMA 7, PLDT link up for polls

By Riza T. Olchondra

MINDFUL THAT THIS YEAR'S elections may very well be a referendum on the current administration, the top media and telecommunication companies have joined forces for the most comprehensive coverage of "Eleksyon 2007."

The eight partners, namely, the Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI), GMA Network Inc., Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), Newsbreak, Catholic Media Network (CMN), Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), Smart Communication Inc. and AMA Education Systems, will use the latest innovations in media, telecommunications and technology in this year's poll coverage.

"We will have a dedicated team

PDI, GMA 7/ A8

INQUIRER PHOTO

ALL FOR ONE: Executives of top media and telecom firms seal their union for election coverage with the signing of a MOA and posing for a souvenir. (At left) Sandy P. Romualdez, PDI president; Manny Pangilinan (2nd from left), chair of the board PLDT and Smart; Felipe Gozon (center), president/CEO GMA Network Inc.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27, 2007

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(All in exact order)

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon will experience mostly cloudy skies with rainshowers, while Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	**Roxas**	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	**Cebu**	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	**Tacloban**	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	**Gen. Santos**	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	**Zamboanga**	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	**Cagayan de Oro**	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	**Davao**	Cloudy with Rains

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/01/26/07 SOURCE PAGASA

Sino poachers not off the hook

Presidential daughter is monitoring the case

By Armand N. Nocum

IF JUSTICE SECRETARY RAUL GONZALEZ WAS thinking of dropping a case against Chinese poachers caught off Palawan, a call from President Macapagal-Arroyo's daughter, Luli, has apparently helped change his mind.

Gonzalez yesterday assured environment conservation advocates that the Department of Justice was now going to pursue charges against 30 Chinese nationals reportedly caught poaching last December in the Tubbataha Reef Natural Park, which hosts one of the most diverse marine life in the world.

Earlier this week, the justice secretary received a barrage of criticism for releasing another group of Chinese poachers caught off nearby Mangsee island, in Balabac, Palawan, last October.

In a telephone interview, Gonzalez admitted that even the President's daughter, Luli Arroyo, is watching the new case closely, and is not happy about the poachers being allowed to go scot-free.

GONZALEZ

LULI ARROYO

"Luli is following it up ... *galit si* Luli *diyan* (Luli is angry at the Chinese poachers)," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez said there was no truth to reports that the DOJ was about to drop the case against the Tubbataha poachers, because of pressure from Chinese officials.

"We will not grant it (the dropping of charges against the poachers)," he said.

Yesterday, the lawyer of the 30 Chinese caught in Tubbataha Reef asked the DOJ to reverse the resolutions of the Palawan provincial prosecutor endorsing the filing of criminal charges against the crewmen of the Hoi Wan, saying they were victims of arbitrary detention. He said this made the evidence against them inadmissible.

"If this kind of evidence is admitted, it will encourage abuses among law enforcers," argued lawyer Roniel Pe.

But in a resolution dated Jan. 12, 2006, provincial prosecutor Alen Ross Rodriguez held that there was prima facie evidence that the 30 crewmembers of the Hoi Wan were poaching in Philippine waters, making the arrest valid. Marine rangers reported that the ship was loaded with live fish species.

The prosecutor also said the delay in bringing the respondents to Puerto Princesa for an inquest was justified since it was due to bad weather.

The provincial prosecutor recommended the filing of criminal charges against the crewmen before the trial court for taking of rare, threatened or endangered species in violation of RA 8550, or the Fisheries Code, and of RA 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act.

The accused poachers have been temporarily released from jail after posting bail.

Meanwhile, Sen. Jamby Madrigal noted that around 900 foreigners, most of them Chinese, have been arrested for poaching in waters off Palawan alone and almost all of them have escaped prosecution by leaving the country after posting bail.

Only 17 Chinese fishermen, she recalled, were convicted of poaching in 2004.

Sen. Pia Cayetano, chair of the Senate committee on the environment, has expressed strong disappointment over release of the Mangsee Island poachers. She urged her colleagues in the Senate to immediately pass a bill declaring the Tubbataha Reef a national park and imposing stronger penalties against poachers.

Wage increase must not exceed 5 percent, says BSP

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS yesterday said the increase in the minimum wage should be limited to only five percent to prevent consumer prices from increasing beyond target levels.

Diwa Guinigundo said the BSP, which is tasked to help ensure price stability, has set an inflation rate target of between four to five percent for 2007.

A hike of over five percent in the minimum wage would cause inflation, or the increase in consumer prices, to breach the target, he warned.

Minimum wage earners are those whose monthly income is P5,000 or below, or whose annual income does not exceed P60,000. Minimum wage earners are also those whose daily pay is P325 or below.

Guinigundo explained that an increase in the minimum wage would accelerate inflation because it would encourage the public to spend more. Higher demand for goods and services, in turn, will lead to an increase in prices.

Guinigundo said that based on latest data available, the BSP expected actual inflation for 2007 to settle closer at the lower end of the four to five percent target range.

He said an inflation close to four percent was possible for this year because of the strengthening of the peso and the softening of oil prices in the world market. A stronger peso makes the cost of imported goods cheaper.

But he said inflation would breach the high-end of the target if a wage hike of more than five percent would be implemented.

Using a P325 daily wage as a guide, this meant that the minimum wage should only be increased by P16.25, or to only P341.25, to keep inflation within target levels.

Labor groups have sought a P125 across-the-board increase in the current minimum wages.

Guinigundo said a wage hike was one of the risks to the inflation target that was strongly being monitored by the BSP in the conduct of its monetary policy. He noted though that this risk had somehow diminished following recent pronouncements from authorities opposing the proposed wage hike.

The House of Representatives and the Senate previously adopted the bill seeking a P125 hike in the minimum wage of workers.

Officials from the executive branch, however, warned against the adverse effect of such increase on the health of the economy.

Romulo Neri, director general of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda), said an across-the-board increase in wages would hurt small businesses that could not afford such an increase.

He said varying capacities of firms should be taken into account in deciding respective amounts of wage hike that would be implemented.

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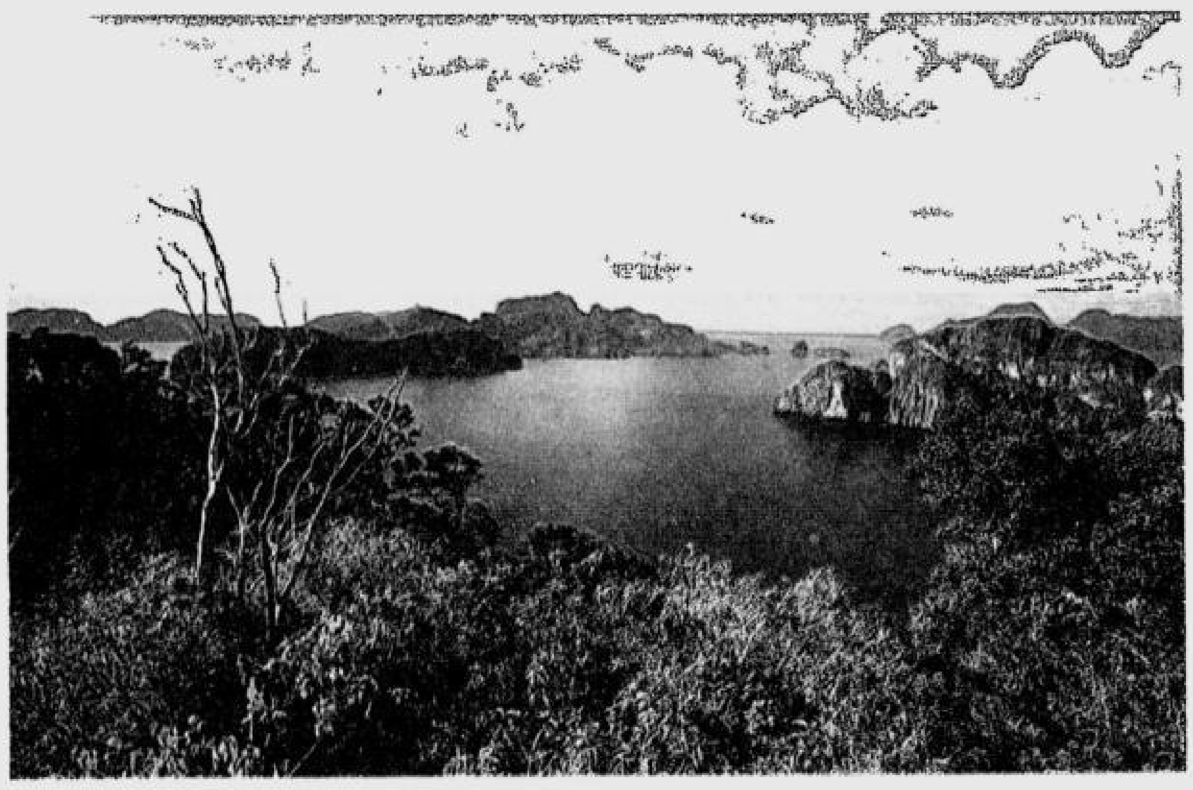

THE EL NIDO Marine Reserve in Bacuit Bay, Palawan, is touted as one of the most beautiful places on Earth.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

El Nido one of 12 finalists in Tourism for Tomorrow tilt

FOR ITS "ENVIRONMENTAL responsibility and commitment to local people," El Nido Resorts in Palawan was named one of 12 finalists in the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards 2007, showcasing the world's best in travel and tourism development.

Costas Christ, judging chair of the awards and an internationally recognized expert in sustainable tourism said: "With rigorous evaluation standards and detailed criteria, the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards have become the 'Oscars' of the travel and tourism industry."

"Today that means not only providing an outstanding tourism product but doing so in a way that helps to protect the cultural and natural heritage of our planet," he added.

El Nido Resorts, operated by 10 Knots Development Corp., is a finalist in the category "Investor in People Award."

It was cited for its "comprehensive approach to fair wages, capacity building and staff education [which] showcases true investment in people. 10 Knots Development Corporation not only complies with the principles of triple-bottom-line sustainable management, environment, culture and economic benefits, but also helps promote sustainable tourism practices on the Philippine island of Palawan."

An international committee of experts selected the 12 finalists from over 130 applications from more than 40 countries.

Winners will be announced on May 11 in Lisbon, Portugal.

The other finalists are:

- Destination award—Great Barrier Reef, Australia; Greenbox Trading As Responsible Tourism, Ireland; the State of Vermont, United States.
- Conservation award—Aqua-Trek, Fiji Islands; Aspen Skiing Company, United States; Caiman Ecological Refuge, Brazil
- Investor in people award—10 Knots Development Corporation/ El Nido Resorts, Philippines; Nihiwatu Resort, Indonesia; Sunderbans Jungle Camp, India
- Global tourism business award—Lindblad Expeditions, United States; Six Senses Resorts & Spas, Thailand; Wilderness Safaris, South Africa

Abu hunt harder now, says general

By Dona Pazzibugan

ALTHOUGH FLUSH WITH SUCCESS, THE military will not find it easy to go after the remaining leaders and members of the extremist Abu Sayyaf, according to a top ground commander in Sulu.

Brig. Gen. Ruben Rafael, commander of the Sulu-based counterterrorist Task Force Comet, yesterday said that since the killing of Abu Sayyaf chieftain Khadaffy Janjalani and other leaders, the bandits had broken up into small groups to avoid further encounters with the military.

"They are always on the move, which makes it more difficult to track them down. How are we going to deal with that?" Rafael told reporters at the Camp Aguinaldo military headquarters in Quezon City.

Rafael said the extremists had also withdrawn from skirmishes with government troops.

"If they can avoid it, they will avoid it," he said. "They go in separate groups and then they regroup. That's their [tactic]. They regroup and plan, but definitely they keep to small groups."

Last Aug. 1, the military renewed pursuit operations against the Abu Sayyaf, which is responsible for several high-profile kidnappings and deadly bomb attacks in recent years.

Rafael and some of the troops who took part in the neutralization of Janjalani, Jainal Ante Sali alias Abu Sulaiman, and other Abu Sayyaf leaders flew to Manila from Sulu earlier this week to receive plaques of recognition and incentives from President Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang.

Ms Arroyo declared that with the top Abu Sayyaf leaders gone, the troops would now go after the "rags."

Asked if the next series of operations would be relatively easier, Rafael said: "Nothing is easy in a soldier's life.

"Whether it's the final battle or not, it's always difficult. So when you plan, you should always expect the worst thing that will happen. But our soldiers' morale is high, especially now that our sacrifices are paying off."

Troops are going after the Abu Sayyaf's remaining identified leaders led by Radulan Sahiron and Isnilon Hapilon, considered the group's "centers of gravity."

Sahiron, in his 70s, is a veteran secessionist fighter who is said to command a big following in Sulu.

According to Rafael, Sahiron is still in Sulu with Omar Patek and Dulmatin, two wanted members of the regional terror group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) who allegedly masterminded the 2002 bomb attacks in Bali, Indonesia.

As for Hapilon, military officials said there were reports that he had slipped back to his base in Basilan.

Military verifying report on Dulmatin

ZAMBOANGA CITY—REPORTS THAT Indonesian terror suspect Dulmatin might have been wounded in the clash that led to the death of Abu Sayyaf senior leader Abu Sulaiman are still being verified, ranking military officials said yesterday.

Maj. Eugene Batara, spokesperson of the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom), expressed surprise at TV reports that Dulmatin had been injured.

"We have been very careful in issuing reports," he said. "The truth is, we don't have solid information of Dulmatin getting injured in the operation."

Batara said Lt. Gen. Eugenio Cedo, Westmincom chief, was communicating with intelligence units to verify the information attributed to 1Lt. Almirante Mijares of the Army's 8th Special Forces Company.

Brig. Gen. Ruperto Pabustan, commanding general of the Joint Special Operation Force, said he had been informed of the possibility that Dulmatin was injured in the clash. But Pabustan, who has jurisdiction over Mijares' unit, said he did not dispatch it because there was no confirmation. *Julie S. Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao*

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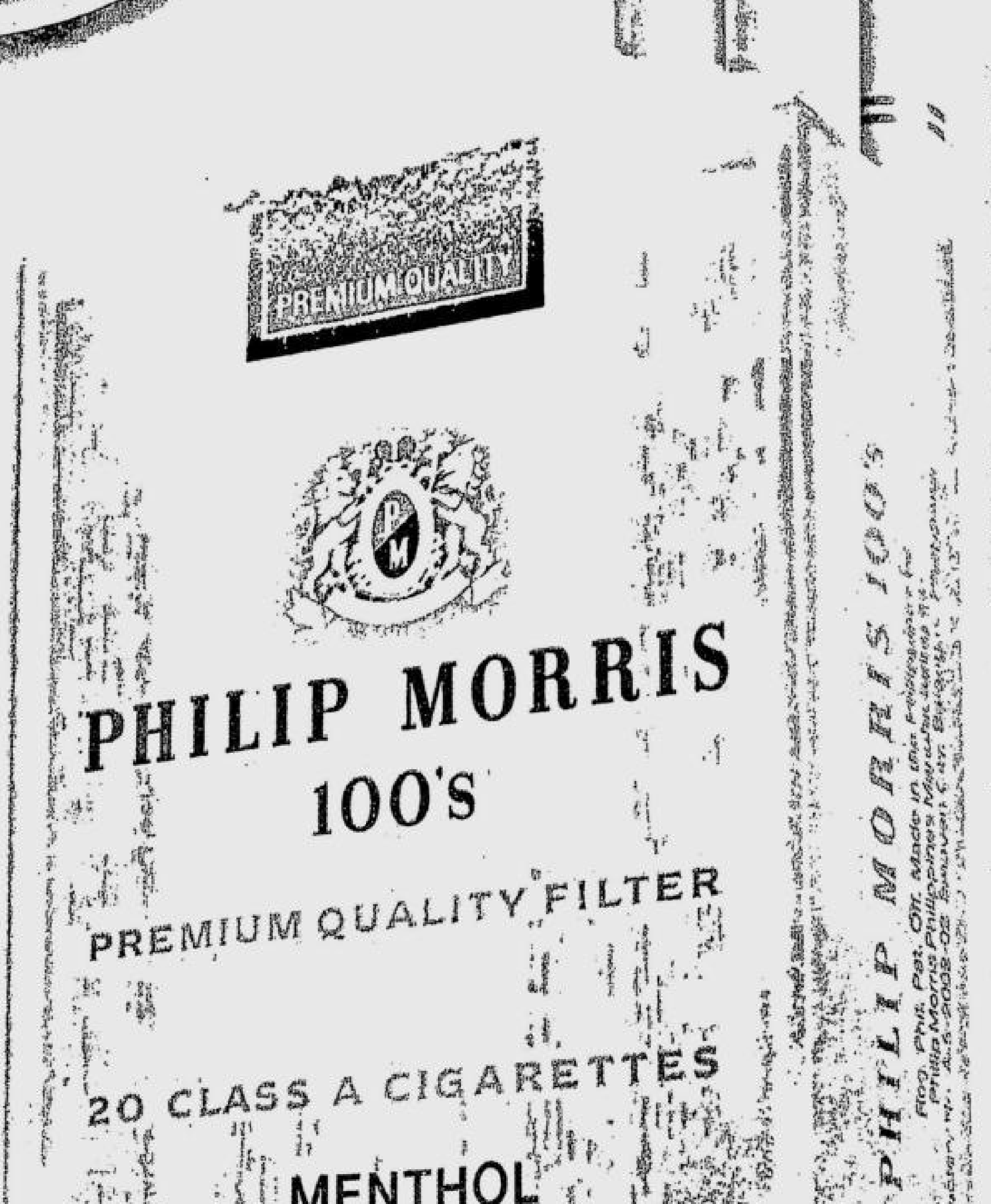

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RP polls still flawed, says CBCP president

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE HEAD OF THE INFLUENTIAL Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines yesterday said the Commission on Elections has apparently still failed to live up to its mandate of ensuring clean, honest and peaceful elections.

According to CBCP president and Jaro, Iloilo Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, the country's elections are still flawed, and the presence of citizen and church groups that keep tab on the electoral process speak of this fact.

Lagdameo said the ideal election was one without the need for a poll watchdog.

"The PPCRV, Namfrel, Nassa Votecare surfaced in order to cure the imperfection of our electoral process," Lagdameo told reporters.

"*Kasi ang panawagan nung una ay* the Comelec should be an instrument of peaceful, honest elections. *Eh parang nung unang panahon hindi naman nakikita at siguro ngayon ding ito,* so these groups continue to respond to this need (The earlier expectation was that the Comelec should be an instrument of peaceful, honest elections. This was not seen in the past, and maybe even up to now, so these groups continue to respond to this need)," the CBCP head said.

PPCRV stands for Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting; Namfrel for National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections and Nassa for National Secretariat for Social Action, Justice and Peace. Nassa is the social action arm of the CBCP. These groups act as poll watchers during elections and even conduct voters' education programs. Namfrel also does a quick count.

Lagdameo said the Comelec apparently welcomed the PPCRV.

The Comelec approved Friday the accreditation of PPCRV as its citizens' arm in the May 2007 elections. *(See related story)*

Catholic bishops led by Lagdameo met with PPCRV representatives the other day to discuss the latter's actions in the prelates' diocese. He said most of the dioceses' social action directors are members of the PPCRV. Most of the group's members come from parishes.

Valera returns to a divided Abra

By Leoncio Balbin Jr. and Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

VALERA RAFFY LERMA

BANGUED, ABRA—AFTER HIS arrest and detention in Quezon City last month, Abra Gov. Vicente Valera arrived here Thursday night and was greeted by streamers either proclaiming his innocence or blaming him for the Dec. 16 assassination of Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr.

The streamers showed that Bersamin's murder had clearly divided the province.

One streamer reads: "*Panday Nagpudnon!* Gobernador *inosente ti panakapapatay ni Congressman. Agbiag ka Panday! Husto ka nga Abreño. Parigaten ken butbutngen da ka ibagam latta ti agpayso* (Panday has confessed! The governor is innocent of the killing of the congressman. Long live Panday! You are a true Abreño. They tortured and threatened you but you still told the truth)."

It was referring to former Army M/Sgt. Rufino Panday, one of the prime suspects in Bersamin's murder, who recanted his earlier statements identifying Valera as the mastermind of the assassination.

But other streamers were less forgiving: "*Agum + Apal* = patay (Greed plus envy equals death). Justice for Cong. Chito Bersamin and SPO1 Adelfo Ortega."

"This is again a challenge for me to double and triple my efforts to continue serving the people of Abra," Valera told reporters here.

This was Valera's first homecoming since Panday identified him as the man who hired Bersamin's killers. Panday's testimony helped the police build up a case against Valera.

Some streamers here praised Panday for withdrawing his allegations. Others said Valera had been framed for Bersamin's murder.

Valera was arrested and detained on charges of illegal possession of firearms and for a traffic violation in Quezon City on Dec. 29. He has not been charged for the Bersamin murder. He was released on Jan. 3 after posting bail.

He faces another illegal firearm charge filed by the police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) in the Cordillera.

He was not arrested, however, because Abra prosecutors have yet to issue a subpoena to start Valera's preliminary investigation, said Senior Supt. Eduardo Bayangos, CIDG Cordillera director.

CIDG men confiscated an unlicensed automatic rifle from Valera's house here last month on the strength of a warrant issued by a Quezon City judge. Valera was not in his house when it was raided.

On his way to Abra, Valera was escorted by about 30 vehicles. His convoy came from the Laoag International Airport in Ilocos Norte.

Eleanor Madariaga, director of the Department of the Interior and Local Government in Abra, said Valera had invited the province's 27 mayors to a meeting on Thursday.

But reports said only more than 10 mayors attended the meeting.

Valera later told reporters that he remained a victim of "pure and simple harassment."

He assailed the setting up of police checkpoints around Bangued, the capital town, as part of security measures enforced by the Abra police and the Task Force Abra to defuse tension after Bersamin's murder.

One of the checkpoints is located near Valera's house.

Senior Supt. Eugene Martin, chief of Task Force Abra, said the checkpoint near Valera's house was set up to secure the town, and check armed men traveling in and out of the capital town.

"If you do not have something to hide, why not just abide [by our rules]?" he said.

Valera has asked the Commission on Elections to place Abra under its control, but election officials have yet to act on the request. Armando Velasco, Comelec director in the Cordillera, said election and police officials in the region would meet on Feb. 1 to discuss the situation in Abra.

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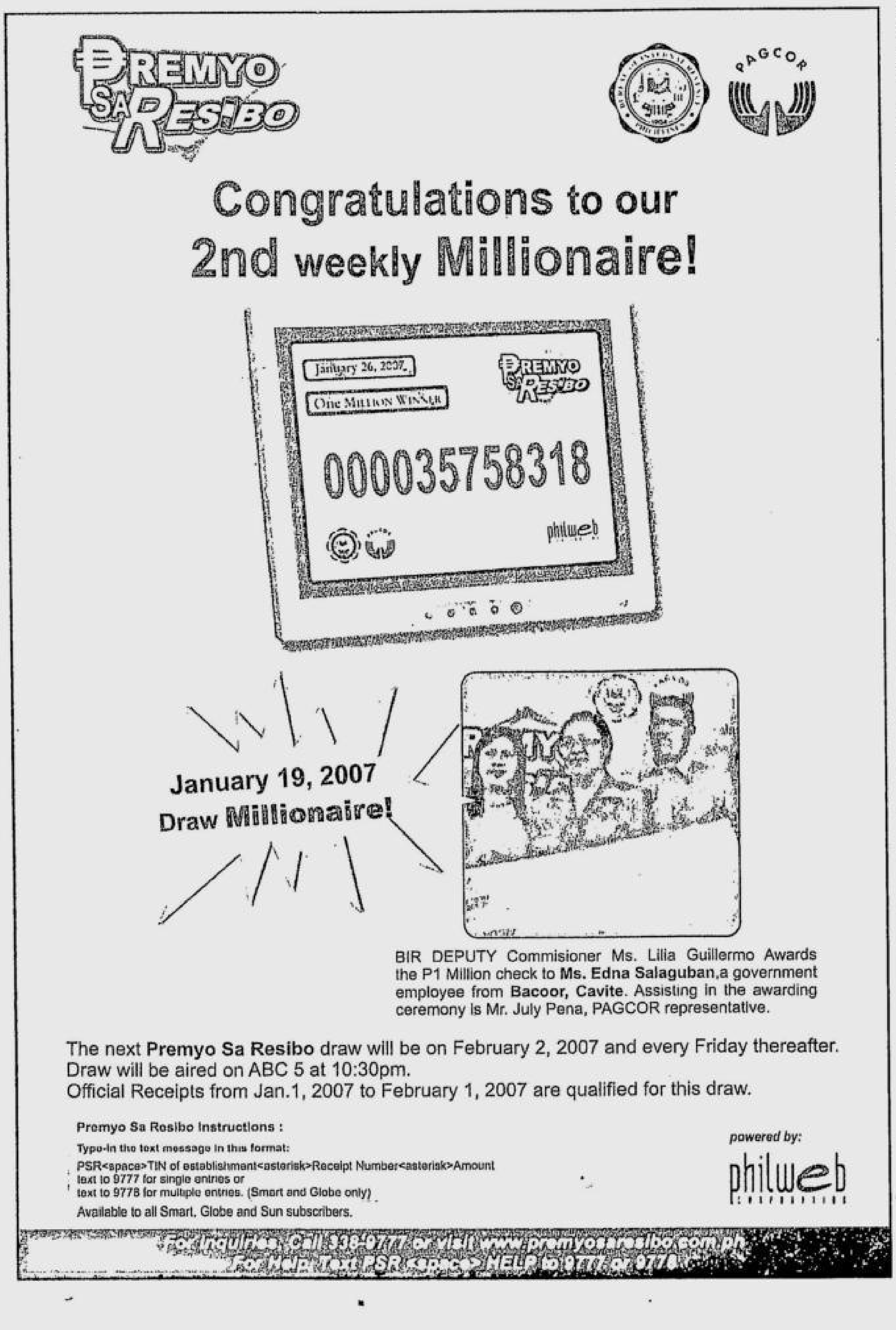

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Comelec accredits Church poll group for May elections

By Jerome Aning

THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS APproved yesterday the application of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) to be accredited as its citizens' arm in the May 2007 elections but delayed its decision on the group's proposed parallel vote tabulation or "quick count."

In an en banc resolution promulgated Friday, Comelec granted PPCRV's Nov. 21 petition for accreditation, subject to certain rules imposed by the poll body.

"[PPCRV's] participation during the past electoral exercises and its commitment toward honest, clean, credible and peaceful elections is duly noted," Comelec en banc said in a resolution penned by Commissioner Rene Sarmiento.

Nobody opposed the PPCRV's accreditation during a hearing conducted by Comelec last Dec. 14.

In contrast, the accreditation of the National Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel) was opposed yesterday by the election lawyer of the late 2004 presidential candidate and movie actor Fernando Poe Jr.

Lawyer Sixto Brillantes said Namfrel proved to be partial and failed its mandated tasks during the previous elections.

In an 18-page petition, Brillantes called on Comelec to look at Namfrel's "dismal performance and the flagrant violation of its assigned, prescribed and mandated undertakings, duties, obligations and responsibilities" during the May 2004 presidential elections.

Brillantes faulted Namfrel for not observing non-partisanship and impartiality, referring to accusations that it committed trending and colluded with Comelec in prematurely declaring President Macapagal-Arroyo as the victor of the hotly contested 2004 presidential race.

PPCRV was allowed to conduct poll watching functions in precincts, including assistance to voters, and in the canvassing of the votes. It would also assist Comelec in voters' education in local government units.

The poll watchdog, among others, was required to be non-partisan and impartial during election period, to disavow foreign aid or influence, to police its ranks to prevent infiltration by persons or groups seeking to destroy its impartiality and to submit weekly reports to the Comelec.

However, the Comelec held in abeyance its decision on PPCRV's request to conduct a quick/parallel/unofficial count since it does not have any track record in conducting the same."

PPCRV was advised to submit proof of its capability to conduct quick counts and show that its proposed method was tamper-proof.

The Catholic group has been conducting unofficial quick counts of national elections since 1992.

In the 2004 national elections, PPCRV said it had about 500,000 members and volunteers from 2,670 parishes who were involved in poll watching and election-related activities.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, January 27, 2007
3rd Week in Ordinary Time
Angela Merici

1st Reading: Heb 11:1-2, 8-19
Gospel: Mark 4:35-41

One day when evening had come, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go across to the other side." So they left the crowd and took him away in the boat he had been sitting in, and other boats set out with him. Then a storm gathered and it began to blow a gale. The waves spilled over into the boat so that it was soon filled with water. And Jesus was in the stern, asleep on the cushion.

They woke him up and said, "Master, don't you care if we sink?" As Jesus awoke, he rebuked the wind and ordered the sea, "Quiet now! Be still!" The wind dropped and there was a great calm. Then Jesus said to them, "Why are you so frightened? Do you still have no faith?"

But they were terrified and they said to one another, "Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

Commentary

We hear how our ancestors lived on faith, making decisions, journeying, changing and being transformed by God. And they died in faith, seeking their hopes and the fulfillment of God's promises. Even when they were tested in faith, they clung to God's word. Do we live with faith? The disciples accompany Jesus in the boat and a storm comes up—and Jesus is asleep! In fact, he is sound asleep! They panic, wake him and whine—do you not care that we are going to drown? (not much faith even in the presence of him who made the seas/winds/storms). His words resound today in our ears: Why are you so terrified? Why are you lacking in faith? We too need to be overcome by awe, be still and quiet, and know that God is with us. We need to obey him—even learn to sleep soundly with him in the midst of storms/waves.

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Gringo seeks X-ray

ACCUSED COUP PLOTTER FORMER SEN. Gregorio Honasan asked a Makati City judge yesterday to allow him to leave his detention center in Laguna to have his left foot X-rayed.

Honasan's request was made by his counsel, Daniel Gutierrez, to Makati City Regional Trial Court Branch 148 Judge Oscar Pimentel who was making an ocular inspection yesterday morning of Honasan's detention center.

Honasan is detained inside Camp Sto. Domingo in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, a training facility for the Philippine National Police (PNP) Special Action Force (SAF).

Gutierrez said there was "some urgency" in having Honasan's foot X-rayed. "We are talking about the foot here. That needs treatment because I don't want my client to loose his foot." *Alcuin Papa*

Pilar College HS reunion

CALLING ON ALL GRADUATES OF ZAMBOANGA City's Pilar College high school, class of 1962. You are invited to attend a reunion tomorrow, Sunday, 11 a.m. at the Cha-Cha Restaurant, Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard, near the Mall of Asia. For details, call: Wilhelmina at 8208325, 09198500580; Ludy at 09212051871; or Sarah at 09178521546.

Correction

IN THE JAN. 24 issue, a front-page story —"SC reverses Ombudsman, orders graft raps vs Disini"—misstated the date the Presidential Commission on Good Government filed a complaint against Herminio Disini before the Sandiganbayan. The PCGG filed the complaint in July 1987—not March 11, 1982.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Lorna Kalaw Tirol, readers' advocate, e-mail address: readersadvocate@inquirer.com. ph or fax Nos. 897-47-93/94, Attn: Readers Advocate. Her phone number is 897-8808 Local 342.

RP cautions Nigeria against rescue try

THE PHILIPPINES HAS ASKED NIGERIA TO abandon attempts to rescue 24 Filipinos kidnapped from a ship off Nigeria, fearing such efforts could further endanger their lives, a Foreign Affairs official said yesterday.

"We want to put our Filipino seafarers out of harm's way so we appealed to the Nigerian government to forego any operation," said Foreign Undersecretary Esteban Conejos.

"If there are ways to resolve this peacefully, we want to exhaust them," he added saying the government was still against paying any ransom.

Updates from Philippine emissaries sent to the Niger Delta had also pinpointed the captives' location in Warri, the so-called "Camp No. 5," according to Conejos.

He said 17 of the 24 Filipinos at the camp are safe, and even "enjoying the convenience of having a TV." The other seven captives are being kept on board the cargo vessel.

The 24 Filipinos were seized by gunmen from a Nigerian-flagged, German-owned cargo ship off the coast of the West African state last week. Camp No. 5 was believed to be the same hideout where another Filipino worker, Anthony Santos, was held along with eight other foreigners on Feb. 18 last year up to his release 11 days later, the official added.

Conejos said there was still no breakthrough in negotiations with the kidnappers.

The country's ambassador to Abuja, Masaranga Umpa, has already met with Niger Delta Gov. James Ibori, who assured the Filipino envoy that negotiations for the release were being "fast-tracked."

Citing Umpa's report to the home office, Conejos said the Nigerian government has requested Manila to lift the suspension on the deployment of Filipino workers in the oil-rich African state as soon as the crisis is resolved.

President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered a ban on the deployment of Filipino workers to Nigeria in the wake of the kidnapping, the second such hostage crisis involving Filipinos in the region in the past six months.

Nigeria is one of the biggest employers of Filipino workers in Africa, with some 3,900 Filipinos employed there at the end of 2006.

Volt Contreras and AFP

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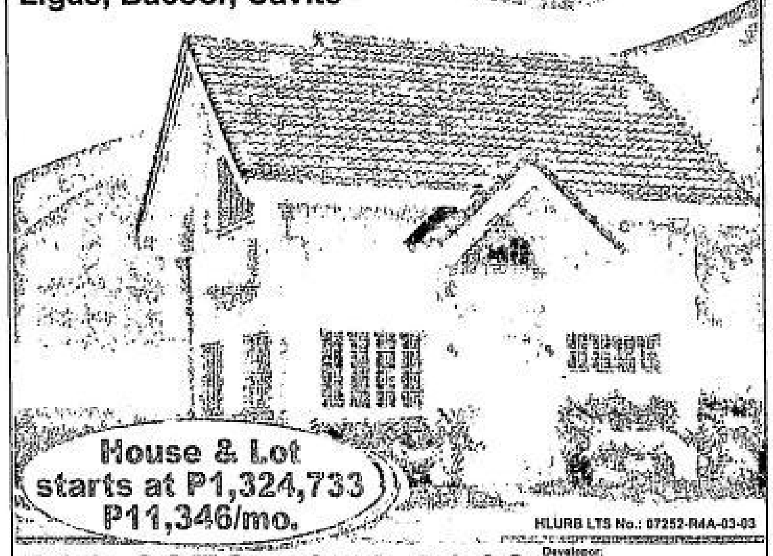

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Naia placed on high alert vs bird flu

By Nikko Dizon

THE MANILA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT Authority (Miaa) yesterday placed the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) terminals on heightened alert for possible bird flu cases following the resurgence of the deadly avian virus in Asia.

All passengers arriving at the Naia terminals will have to undergo thermal screening before they are allowed to enter the country, the Miaa said.

The Miaa, in coordination with the health department's Bureau of Quarantine, only used to screen passengers who came from countries with recorded cases of bird flu.

Three thermal cameras are now installed at the Naia 1 while the Naia Centennial Terminal has two for temperature screening.

In a statement, the Miaa said that its medical personnel on duty would make sure that all arriving passengers, including airline crew members, pass through the thermal camera scanner.

"Anyone who will reflect an unusually high body temperature as indicated by the thermal scanner will be checked by the medical staff-on-duty," the Miaa said.

The Miaa has also identified a holding area for the aircraft carrying passengers with suspected avian flu cases.

Passengers with high temperature will be brought to an isolation area.

The Miaa said it has also coordinated with the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) and the San Lazaro Hospital for admission of passengers with probable bird flu.

For years, a foot bath has also been in place at the arrival concourse areas of the Naia terminals.

The foot bath is a carpet with disinfectant on which all incoming passengers and crew walk to sanitize the soles of their shoes as one of the preventive measures against diseases, such as the "foot and mouth disease."

Greenpeace warns vs entry of nuke waste under JPEPA

THE ENVIRONMENTALIST GROUP GREENpeace yesterday warned that the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement or JPEPA, now awaiting Senate ratification, includes dangerous provisions that would encourage the export of Japan's nuclear and radioactive waste into the country.

The JPEPA also has provisions which exempt radioactive materials and "spent (irradiated) fuel elements (cartridges) of nuclear reactors" among others, from tariff. Greenpeace believes the said headings would include wastes from nuclear reactors.

Despite clear prohibitions against the entry of radioactive waste into the country's borders, there are apprehensions that the treaty, once adopted would trump existing laws including Republic Act No. 6969 or the Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Control Act which supposedly guards against such dangerous waste shipments into the country.

"JPEPA proponents will probably argue that there is no intention to trade in nuclear waste between the two countries and that our existing laws will protect us from such shipments. If the intention is not there, then why include these waste provisions in the first place?" said Greenpeace Southeast Asia toxics campaigner Beau Baconguis in a statement.

"By encouraging the trading of radioactive and toxic waste, the agreement only increases the risk that these dangerous materials will end up in our shores one day. The Philippine Senate must not ratify JPEPA unless all nuclear and toxic waste dumping provisions are scrapped," he added.

"It is highly immoral and unjust for a rich country like Japan to dump its dangerous wastes on countries which neither have the means nor resources to manage their own waste problems effectively," Baconguis said.

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Bright lights, live bands now perk up nights in Jolo

From page A1

"We have live bands, dancing and movies on Saturday nights so our people can relax," said Sulu Gov. Benjamin Loong. "We're trying to erase the negative impression of our province as a no man's land due to the Abu Sayyaf menace."

'Virtually lawless'

In 2000, Abu Sayyaf fighters raided a resort across the Malaysian border and kidnapped 21 people, including German, French, Finnish and South African tourists, and brought them to Jolo.

After receiving huge ransoms, the Abu Sayyaf kidnapped another group of tourists, including three Americans, from a resort in Palawan. Two of the Americans were subsequently killed.

Jolo was virtually lawless then, and pistol shots rang out regularly at night. Troops patrolled the streets, but the Abu Sayyaf was known to operate openly in the town.

"Now, you can walk around at night freely and you can observe that many people can now afford to buy a brand-new or second-hand scooter," city official Mohammad Alih told Reuters.

"There's no war here; it's only in the mountains. It's too far away to affect us," he said.

The change is pronounced among the young.

"I hate violence, I hate the Abu Sayyaf," said high school student Perhana Sahidjun, 13.

Sahidjun was among the students who waved US and Philippine paper flags after American officials led by US Undersecretary of State Karen Hughes and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney inaugurated on Thursday a school building with Internet-connected computers in Maimbung town.

"I'm scared and tired of fleeing from my village every time soldiers clashed with the Abu Sayyaf. I wish they would go away and leave us peacefully because I want to become a teacher someday," the 13-year-old said.

JULIE S. ALIPALA/INQUIRER MINDANAO/MALACAÑANG PHOTO

OVERWHELMED by a warm welcome from residents of Maimbung, Sulu, first-time visitor Karen Hughes, Undersecretary of State and American envoy Kristie Kenney mingle with schoolchildren and their parents who are beneficiaries of US-funded projects in the province.

Two faces

But not all the people on the island are happy.

"We were OK here before the military came in," said a Muslim preacher who only gave his name as Umbra.

"It's the military that was creating trouble here. Those Americans have two faces. We should not trust them because they may look kind in front of you, but they are the enemies of Islam."

Some residents said it was not safe yet to travel outside Jolo, particularly in areas around Patikul, Talipao and Indanan towns because of the presence of Moro militants as well as bandits on the lookout for potential kidnap and robbery victims.

'Love of weapons'

The Tausug, who dominate the 600,000 population of the island, are renowned for their love of weapons and their propensity to use them.

But Governor Loong said things were changing.

"The mind-set of the people of Sulu has been transformed," he said. "The Tausug are beginning to value their farms more than their guns." *Reuters*

Quarrelsome star hangs over pols in year of the pig

From page A1

In contrast, women in matriarchal positions, have "the magical eight star which will bring them wealth, success and recognition," she added.

"So in any kind of a fight, it tends to favor the woman, especially since the year of the pig is also a Yin year," Too said.

Will this be a lucky year for President Macapagal-Arroyo, who, incidentally was born in the year of the pig?

Getting rich, staying safe

Too declined to answer but said that she would reveal more today in a feng shui extravaganza titled "Getting Rich and Staying Safe in the Year of the Fire Boar 2007" at the Premier Cinema of the SM Mall of Asia from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The second part of the extravaganza is scheduled tomorrow at the Fiesta Pavilion of the Manila Hotel from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Too said that in feng shui, one's personal chart—guided by the year one was born—was always consulted.

Asked if she had any forecast for the Philippines, which is now facing an election year, Too simply reiterated that for politicians who are afflicted by the quarrelsome star, "there is a tendency to find fault and play dirty."

"Leaders should not be so quarrelsome. They should walk away from a fight. Because when they fight, they will lose. Patience is the key," she added.

On a bright note, she said the Philippines was located in South East Asia, an area which enjoys "winning luck."

Economy good

"The economy will be good. And there is very good potential to create wealth... You will see a lot of economic and commercial action. There's a lot of good luck in this area. It affects the Philippines and other countries in the Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). I am happy that I also come from here," said Too, who is Malaysian.

Industry groups that deal mainly with metal and earth will do very well this year, she added.

The year of the boar officially starts on Feb. 18, the Chinese New Year. It is the last of the 12-year animal cycle.

LILLIAN TOO: A magical year for women, the feng shui expert says upon arrival at the Naia on Friday. JESS YUSON

"So it can be quite an exciting time for us. I think we can look forward to a good year ahead. Natural disasters, I think, will continue but generally it will be a good year," said Too who is the founder and chair of the World of Feng Shui (WOFS).

Harvard graduate

An MBA graduate from the prestigious Harvard Business School in the United States, Too was a banker who credits her success to an "in-depth knowledge of feng-shui in her every decision in life," according to a press statement from WOFS-Philippines.

WOFS-Philippines president, Maritess Allen, noted the growing interest in feng shui among Filipinos.

Last year, more than 1,000 people attended Too's first feng shui extravaganza in Manila. It was so successful the Philippines is now part of her annual feng shui road show.

Too was in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur before coming to Manila. From here, she will head to Canada and the United States.

Benefits everyone

She said that feng shui, which is about space and time, used to be "dismissed as superstition."

She stressed that feng shui experts are not fortune tellers. "The knowledge of feng shui is rather technical and scientific." according to Too.

"Feng shui is very useful. It can benefit everyone from taxi drivers to tycoons to leaders because you will know where you will benefit most as well as the danger areas," she said.

Abalos: Computerization of poll . . .

From page A1

a law for which we're not ready," Abalos told reporters.

"If we fail because of lack of preparations, people will still talk ill of me long after I'm buried six feet below the ground."

The Comelec chief clarified that he welcomed the enactment of the Automated Election Systems law, (Republic Act No. 9369) but that he was concerned about the timing of its implementation.

"It would have been a good legacy for me because this is likely the last election that I will oversee," he said.

Comelec is scheduled to convene its advisory council on Monday to make a final decision on the viability of pilot-testing the automated voting, counting, canvassing, transmission and consolidation as provided for by the new law.

Council's recommendation

Last month, the council—composed of representatives from other government agencies and technical consultants—recommended that the pilot-testing be dropped for lack of time and preparations.

"If you go against the advice of the council and you fail, God knows where you'll end up," Abalos said. "Everyone is saying it's operationally impossible because it's almost February."

The council backed full automation for 2010, adding that two years would be needed for the study and selection of the best technology, training of personnel and public demonstration and education.

By e-mail or fax

Abalos said the Comelec could still implement the electronic transmission of voting results since this could be done with the use of simple technology, such as texting, e-mail or fax.

"Electronic transmission would lessen incidents of possible cheating," he said.

ABALOS: Only in the ARMM

GORDON: No excuses

Abalos said that the Comelec, if pressed, could still enforce partial computerization in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, instead of in two highly urbanized cities and two provinces each in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, as required by the new law.

"Perhaps we can implement it in just one region, ARMM, because that's a problem area," he added.

No money

He said Comelec earlier experienced difficulty securing the approval of local government officials for the pilot-testing. Comelec last month listed 12 possible areas where partial automation can be implemented.

"Some local officials said they wanted to study it first while some asked what if problems occurred and caused confusion among the candidates and the electorate," he said.

Abalos also said that the Comelec had not received the P2.6 billion which Malacañang said it had set aside for the law's initial implementation. He said the law requires that the funds come from the Comelec's election modernization funds.

"We don't have such funds at all now," he said.

James Arthur Jimenez, director of the Comelec education and information department, said technology suppliers required a certain amount of time before they could work on automation pilot-testing.

'He has no excuse'

Sen. Richard Gordon said yesterday that Abalos could be held liable for neglect of duty if he failed to implement partial automation of the May 14 elections.

"He has no excuse. He has no room to maneuver. He has to implement this. He can't duck out of this," Gordon, who vigorously pushed for the bill's approval by the Senate and then by the House, told reporters.

"The ball is in the court of Chair Abalos to make sure that the law is implemented."

President Macapagal-Arroyo signed the measure into law last Thursday, putting an end to the wrangling between Abalos and lawmakers on the wisdom of implementing poll automation with less than four months left before the elections.

Possible cases

Gordon, sponsor and author of the measure, said that Abalos could not abdicate his "constitutional responsibility" to implement the law, otherwise, he could face charges in court.

"[He can be liable for] neglect of duty, incompetence. We can make a case for him for antigraft in the Ombudsman. He's liable for culpable violation of Constitution. He can be removed by impeachment," he said.

The proposed law seeks to amend and expand the scope of the current automation law by authorizing the use of an AES (automated election system) in the voting, counting, consolidation, canvassing and transmission of results and other electoral processes.

The automation includes the speedy electronic transmission of results in real time or within the hour, and the voter-verifiable paper audit trail.

Gordon said there was still time to lease and bid machines for the May polls.

US machines can be used

Machines, like those used in San Francisco and Hawaii in the US midterm elections in November last year, could be brought into the country, and be bidded out within the next three months, according to the senator.

"I believe it can easily be done. The machines are right there everywhere in the world and you can lease some of the machines right away," he said.

Gordon said that the machine used in Hawaii had all the features required by the automation law, such as a voter-verifiable paper audit trail, security against unauthorized access and accessibility for illiterates and persons with disabilities.

Gordon said the Comelec could complete the bidding in less than three months, since automation covered only six provinces and six cities.

"He (Abalos) has to implement it, it's so easy. He can use Batanes, Manila, Siquijor, Angeles or Olongapo or any other city he wants," he added. "The important thing is to stop ducking out."

Atong deal kept secret for security . . .

From page A1

mission to the court, it was already a public document," Villa-Ignacio said.

Sleeping in noodle house

Villa-Ignacio also said that with the prevailing speculation that Ang was poised to rat on Estrada, the latter's lawyers should have attended the pre-trial proceedings.

"Any law student knows that the first agenda in a pre-trial is plea bargaining. And with reports that Ang will testify against President Estrada, [the defense lawyers] should have showed up," he said.

Villa-Ignacio said that apart from plea bargaining, pre-trial proceedings also involved stipulations of fact, marking of exhibits and admissions.

"They were caught sleeping in the noodle house. They should not blame us for their lapse," he said.

According to Saguisag, the plea bargain agreement contains information prejudicial to the defense of Estrada, who is accused of amassing some P4 billion in ill-gotten wealth.

"The hidden agenda is disgraceful as the intent was not even to give us a copy of an important document that may affect our client. What law authorizes such posture?" Saguisag had said.

'Safer' facility

After the presentation of the plea bargaining agreement to the Sandiganbayan Special Division, Ang's lawyers manifested in open court that threats to their client's life might have gotten more serious because of the proposed deal.

But Villa-Ignacio said it was now up to Ang's lawyers to request the court that he be moved to a detention facility "safer" than the Metro Manila District Jail (MMDJ), where he is currently being held.

Asked if he and the other prosecutors would object to Ang's transfer to a facility other than a jail, Villa-Ignacio said they would first have to study the formal request.

When Ang was extradited from the United States on Nov. 10 and detained at the National Bureau of Investigation headquarters, the prosecution panel objected to Ang's subsequent request to remain at the NBI facility instead of being committed to the congested Quezon City Jail.

Almost immediately, Ang was transferred by the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology to the MMDJ at Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan, Taguig.

Prison officials cited purported threats on Ang's life at the city jail.

THIRD REDUCTION THIS MONTH

Oil prices cut by 50¢ per liter

By Abigail L. Ho

OIL COMPANIES YESTERDAY CUT THE pump prices of gasoline, diesel and kerosene by another 50 centavos a liter as crude oil prices continued to decline in the international market.

Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Chevron Philippines Inc., Eastern Petroleum Corp., Flying V, Seaoil Philippines Inc., and Unioil Petroleum Philippines Inc. all adjusted their fuel prices at 2 p.m. yesterday.

Total (Philippines) Corp. followed suit at 8 p.m. last night.

This was the third price reduction implemented by the oil firms this year.

Data from the Department of Energy showed that the regional benchmark Dubai crude slid to an average of $51.62 a barrel in January from $58.68 a barrel last month.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products also dropped to an average of $61.44 a barrel as of Jan. 25, from last month's $68.16 a barrel.

MOPS-based diesel went down to a $68.20-a-barrel average in the first 25 days of the month after surging to $72.20 a barrel in December 2006.

"The further softening of oil prices in the international market is now beginning to provide some relief to motorists. As the end of the Winter season approaches, we are hoping that prices of oil in the international market will remain stable given that oil supplies remain adequate," Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said in a statement yesterday.

World oil prices stood below $55 on Friday after a two percent fall the previous day.

Oil prices are down about 13 percent since the start of January, despite Opec's pledges to cut supplies.

Oil firms, particularly the members of the Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association, had earlier said that fuel prices would go down by P1.50 a liter this month.

Going into the final stretch of January, local oil firms had fulfilled this commitment, implementing its third fuel price cut yesterday, for a total of P1.50 a liter so far this year.

Yesterday's price adjustment brought premium unleaded gasoline prices to between P34.35 and P37 a liter, diesel to between P30.25 and P32.50 a liter, and kerosene to between P33.33 and P37.50 a liter.

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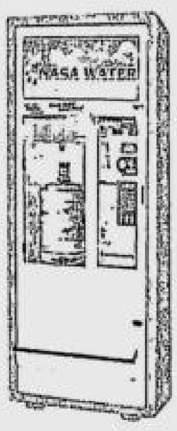

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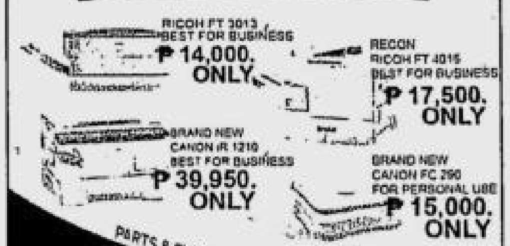

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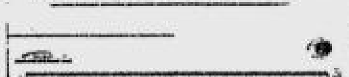

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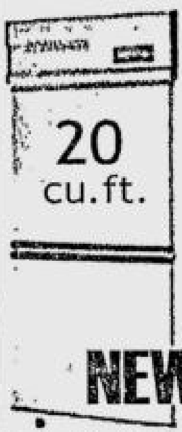

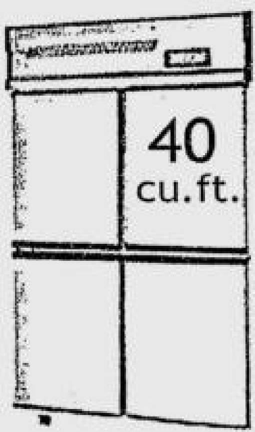

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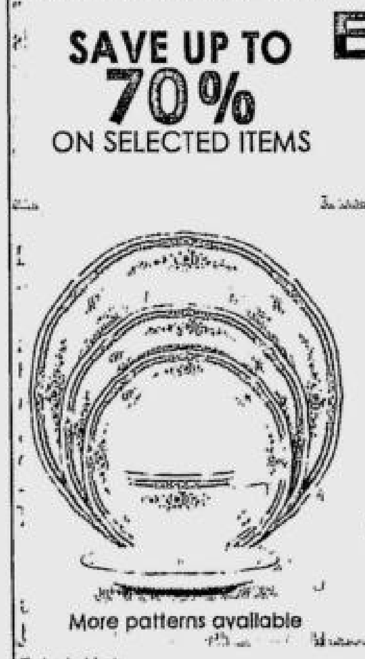

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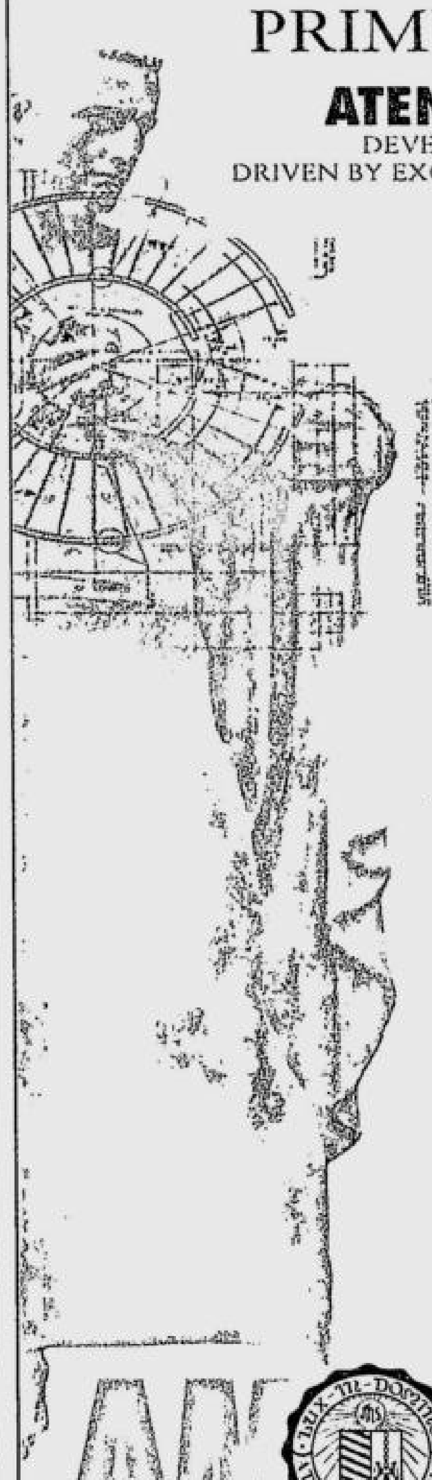


UNO unfazed by defections

By TJ Burgonio

THE UNITED OPPOSITION insisted yesterday it was unperturbed by the departure of former Senators Vicente Sotto III, Tessie Aquino-Oreta and Francisco Tatad from its ranks, and by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile's resignation as chair of the Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino.

"UNO remains whole. It's not bothered by all this. UNO's candidates are strong on their own," Sen. Luisa "Loi" Ejercito, wife of ousted President and UNO leader Joseph Estrada, said in an interview.

Ejercito said she wasn't surprised by Enrile's resignation.

"That's to be expected. He joined the majority in the Senate a long time ago," she said.

Enrile's chief of staff, Gigi Reyes, confirmed that the senator had written Estrada that he was resigning as PMP chair but would continue to remain as party-member.

"He was resigning as PMP chairman so as not to be a burden to the party since he could not support the full senatorial slate proposed by the UNO ticket," Reyes said in a statement.

Enrile had indicated that while he was committed to support the candidacy of San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito, Estrada's son, he could not "in conscience" support some of the personalities UNO was considering to include in its senatorial slate. He did not identify them.

The UNO is drafting a line-up that includes Senate President Manuel Villar Jr., Sen. Ralph Recto and Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano of the Nacionalista Party; Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan and Rep. Benigno Aquino III of the Liberal Party; and Sen. Panfilo Lacson, among others.

'Team Unity' shaping up

From page A1

ing in the run-up to the midterm elections.

The source said the 12-member roster was currently being filled up by leaders of the coalition members—former President Fidel V. Ramos, House Speaker Jose de Venecia and Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs Gabriel Claudio for Lakas-CMD; Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno for Kampi; and Nationalist People's Coalition chair Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco.

Their short list will be presented to Ms Arroyo, who has the final say on the lineup, said the source.

In the wake of Sotto's and Oreta's decision to bolt from the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, the opposition appeared to have suffered another setback when Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile resigned as chair of the Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino. *(See related story on this page).*

Enrile's office confirmed the resignation on grounds that he could not support in full the proposed senatorial ticket of the United Opposition, but said he would remain as PMP party member.

Speaking on radio dzMM, Defensor said the President wanted to present a unified slate to the voters as a first step toward healing the wounds that had scarred the country since 2001.

He also said the coalition could not deny the drawing power of reelectionist senators, which would only be enhanced by the administration's machinery.

'Not 1 but 2 Trojan horses'

But another administration stalwart, Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr., warned against the inclusion of Sotto and Oreta in the so-called unity slate, calling them "Trojan horses" that in the end could destroy the administration camp.

"Have you forgotten the myth of the Greeks' Trojan horse?" asked Pichay.

He was referring to the giant, hollow wooden horse given as a gift by the Greeks while pretending to abandon their siege on the city of Troy. Greek warriors hiding inside the horse eventually seized the city.

Mincing no words, Pichay referred to "not one, but two Trojan horses."

Strange bedfellows

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles was more diplomatic.

"It may be publicly unpalatable ... but politics makes for strange bedfellows," Nograles said. "There are no permanent enemies, just permanent political interests in this kind of game."

Sotto and Oreta surprised their opposition colleagues last Wednesday by quitting the LDP and aligning themselves with the Nationalist People's Coalition, which is part of the administration coalition in the House.

"When they were still benefiting from Estrada, they kept on accusing the President (Arroyo) of lying, cheating and stealing. Now, they want to be endorsed by the President. What kind of politics are they playing?" said Pichay.

"How can you campaign for a party offering new faces, new politics if you will include in the slate those people advocating the ouster of the President?"

He said taking in Sotto and Oreta "would reward political opportunism."

More defections?

Speaker Jose de Venecia predicted the exodus of governors and local executives to the Lakas-CMD because of infighting within the opposition.

After 12 governors joined the ruling party last Wednesday, "more local officials have sent word of their intention to take their oath as Lakas members because of the ruling party's formidable political machinery," he said.

Claudio said a unity ticket would keep the election campaign "non-confrontational and, therefore, not disruptive of the present economic growth the country is experiencing."

One vision

But in a phone interview, Claudio would not confirm if Sotto and Oreta would really be included in the administration slate for the senatorial race.

Claudio said the administration was "open" to taking in or supporting candidates "who at least share the need to uphold the national interest, especially in terms of protecting the momentum for economic growth."

"You don't have to be black or white about whether you are administration or opposition as long as there is a commonality in purpose and vision."

NPC predicament

The question of whether the NPC would align itself with the administration in the senatorial race is expected to be answered soon.

Sotto said the party would have a "crucial" meeting next week to discuss, among others, its senatorial slate.

He said the NPC might be in a predicament because this would be the first time, if at all, that it would be fielding senatorial candidates.

"Will they align itself with the administration as it had traditionally done in the House, or align with the opposition or put up their own slate?" Sotto said in a phone interview.

"I'm sure the leaders will address this on Tuesday," he said.

Sotto had shrugged off as speculation that his and Oreta's joining the NPC was an indication they were joining the administration senatorial ticket. *With a report from TJ Burgonio*

THE PARTNERS posing for a photograph after the signing of a memorandum of agreement for the tieup on election coverage at the GMA 7 office in Quezon City (from left): lawyer Felipe Gozon, president and CEO, GMA Network Inc.; Sandy Prieto-Romualdez, president, Philippine Daily Inquirer Inc.; Romeo "Butch" Gonzales, COO, RGMA; Judd Gallares, president, New Media Inc.; Alexander Pabico, OIC-Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism; Karim Bangcola, EVP, AMA Education Systems Holdings Inc.; Gilberto R. Duavit Jr., EVP and COO-GMA Network Inc.; Isagani Yambot, publisher, Philippine Daily Inquirer Inc.; Ernesto Alberto, SVP-corporate business group, PLDT; Mon Isberto, group head-public affairs, Smart Communications; Fr. Francis Lucas, president, Catholic Media Network; Marites D. Vitug, editor-in-chief, Newsbreak Publishing Inc.; and Manny Pangilinan, chairman of board, PLDT and Smart. JOAN BONDOC

PDI, GMA 7, PLDT link up for Eleksyon '07

From page A1

to [help] get the election news as accurately, as fairly and as quickly as possible," said INQUIRER publisher Isagani Yambot at the partners' signing of the memorandum of agreement yesterday in Quezon City.

He said the country's leading newspaper would tap its research team to file in-depth reports.

GMA chairperson Felipe Gozon said he was confident that "Eleksyon 2007" would be a resounding success as "the partners have all renewed their commitment to ensure that the nation will have an honest election with credible results."

PCIJ OIC Alecks Pabico said the coverage of elections past had been criticized as superficial, "like a horse race, cockfight or boxing match."

More depth

He said a study conducted by the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility on the 2004 elections showed that there was an obsession with personalities, opinion polls and "winnability," rather than issues and platforms.

He said he hopes this year's coverage will have more depth.

Newsbreak editor in chief Marites Vitug expressed confidence that the partners' joined forces would help voters make informed choices.

"There is strength in platforms ... [we] will make sense of the news using the vast resources and enormous reach of the GMA Network and other partners," she said.

PLDT provides data links

To help media achieve this goal, PLDT chairperson Manuel V. Pangilinan said his group would provide more voice and data links than it did in the past.

He said PLDT and Smart would provide more leased lines, satellite wireless services, prepaid cards, SIM cards and 3G services for participants in the "Eleksyon 2007" initiative.

"The most important change is in video—via 3G. 3G phones will be provided [so they could] send video clips live from the field. In March, we should be able to introduce satellite phones in partnership with Inmarsat," Pangilinan said. "GMA can do a CNN- or BBC-type of report from the field. This is a profound show of [our] concern that the election results reflect the will of the people."

AMA volunteers

AMA Education Systems executive vice president Karim Bangcola said AMA volunteers in 32 selected provinces (out of a total 79) would be able to count five million votes 24 hours after the polls close on May 14, 12 million more votes after another 24 hours and 8 million more votes after another 24 hours.

He added that AMA volunteers in 13 of NCR's 17 cities would be able to process two million votes in the first 24 hours after the polls close and the rest of the votes in the next 48 hours.

CMN president Fr. Francis Lucas said their network's 52 stations nationwide would cover the election process in the rural areas instead of focusing on "Imperial Manila."

HK maids to hold protest rally over new rules

From page A1

In fact, up to a dozen contracts for Filipino maids in Hong Kong have already been cancelled because of the new rules introduced by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) last Dec. 16 that disallow domestic workers from leaving the country unless they undergo a skills and language training course, said Dolores Balladares, chair of the militant United Filipinos (UniFil-Migrante) in Hong Kong.

The new OFW package—ostensibly aimed at enhancing Filipino competitiveness as "supermaids"—also sets a minimum age requirement of 25, a higher minimum wage of US$400 and prohibits agencies from charging placement fees.

'Super-extortion'

But Balladares denounced the supermaid training requirement as an unnecessary delay and another attempt at "super-extortion."

Another statement issued jointly by Mission for Migrant Workers (HK) Society and the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants also blasted the training requirement as nothing but "an additional financial burden on OFWs."

The training fee is said to cost between P8,000 and P10,000, plus a P1,000 fee for each of the Tesda and Owwa certificates.

Balladares warned that unless the policy was scrapped, many more—perhaps thousands more—will lose their jobs.

She cited the case of outbound domestic Gina Mabalot, who was all set to leave for Hong Kong on Jan. 9 but was stopped and told to undergo a skills training course at the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda) and a language and culture seminar at the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (Owwa).

Mabalot immediately complied, only to learn later that her Hong Kong employer had backed out on Jan. 12, after realizing that it would take her up to two months to complete the training and the extra paperwork.

Mabalot was enraged, as she and her relatives had shouldered the recruitment fee of about P20,000 that her employer was supposed to pay. She also said she felt the training was totally unnecessary, as she had already worked in Hong Kong for 10 years.

It's a feeling shared by Aileen Talamor, whose previous work experience as a domestic helper in Hong Kong enabled her to speak Cantonese fluently.

Talamor already had a visa from Hong Kong immigration when she was told to undergo training—which she obviously does not need.

One of Talamor's relatives in Hong Kong says her employer is fuming over the delay, as she was expected to arrive no later than Jan. 15. The only reason she has not been sacked—is because she speaks Cantonese, which is important for the job that awaits her here.

Employers turned off

Emry's, one of the leading recruitment agencies for Filipinos in Hong Kong, confirmed that many employers are getting turned off by the long wait for helpers from the Philippines and are looking at hires from other nationalities—often Indonesians—who are about to overtake Filipinos as the dominant ethnic group in the domestic helper market in Hong Kong.

Ester Ylagan, who co-owns Emry's with husband Ric, said they have had about five cases of employers backing out after being told of the new POEA regulations. She added that there could have been more, had they not taken it upon themselves to discourage employers who appear to need a helper immediately.

The minimum age requirement has also caused Emry's to lose potential clients.

"As we only deal with direct hires (from the Philippines), many of the employers who approach us are those looking at hiring young workers," said Ylagan. "But we immediately tell them that we now have to comply with the new age requirement."

But neither age nor training is seen by militant groups as a vital factor in ensuring the well-being of foreign domestic workers, at least in Hong Kong.

"The rationale behind such a provision is unclear. Even the perceived reason that domestic helpers who are 25 and can better fight for their rights is weak and unsupported by objective facts," she said.

Regarding the minimum wage requirement of $400, OFW leaders said many HK workers are already earning at least US$37 more than that amount.

No-placement fee rule

The no-placement fee rule, meanwhile, is stirring a hornet's nest, as Filipinos who come here to work are known to pay recruiters an average of P85,000.

Militants in Hong Kong are not about to disagree with the no-placement fee policy, but cast doubt on the ability of the government to enforce the rule.

The Missions' joint statement said, "There already exists a policy that says placement fees charged by private recruitment agencies should not exceed the equivalent of one month salary of the OFW in the host country. Yet, our experience shows numerous cases of overcharging by recruitment agencies through various modus operandi."

Amid the confusion and recrimination, Labor Attaché to Hong Kong Bernardino Julve said he had already secured exemptions from the age and training requirements for those already working as domestic helpers here.

"At first we were told that there would be no exemptions to the rules," said Julve. "But I managed to convince POEA to reconsider, saying chaos might erupt here."

The Federated Association of Manpower Exporters Inc. (FAME), a group of recruitment agencies in the Philippines, is also reporting of further concessions from the POEA.

Concessions

In an advisory issued to its members, FAME said that during a meeting with officials from the Department of Labor and Employment, POEA, Tesda and Owwa, it was agreed that:

1. Returning workers, and those who have formerly worked abroad in the same region, will be exempt from the Tesda tests and Owwa seminar.

2. Those bound for Hong Kong and Taiwan will be exempted from Tesda assessment, but will still need to obtain a certificate of training.

3. Returning workers will still be able to leave if they are at least 21 years old. First-timers should be at least 21 years old and have at least two years of college education or two years' vocational training.

Labor Undersecretary Danny Cruz confirmed in a telephone interview that the agreements outlined by FAME did take place.

"The POEA is still studying whether it can promulgate (the changes) without amending the guidelines issued earlier," said Cruz. "But we hope to be able to do it within the week."

Possible drop in deployments

Any move by DOLE to avert a possible drop in the number of deployments to such a model destination as Hong Kong could not come any sooner.

Already, the Filipinos are losing their dominant position in the territory's domestic helper market. From a high of 90-percent market share some four years ago, the Filipinos now comprise only 52 percent of the total foreign domestic workforce here.

That translates to 120,788 at the end of last year. Of this, about 30 percent, or 36,236 are new hires. These are the ones likely to lose their jobs, if no immediate solution is found to the impasse created by the apparently well-meaning, but hastily implemented labor policy.

GMA bats for Asean as major trading bloc

From page A1

ments, equitable economic development and narrowed socio-economic development gaps.

Asean first attempted to integrate with the implementation of the Asean Free Trade Area in 1992.

Since then, trade within Asean has grown four times, prompting Asean leaders to decide to accelerate the establishment of an Asean Community by 2015, five years ahead of the original deadline of 2020.

Asean also took steps during the Cebu summit to bring down more barriers to trade, in a bid to reduce transaction costs and the cost of doing business in the region.

The 10-member Asean includes Brunei, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and Burma (Myanmar).

Global interest in Asean

The emergence of Asean as a major trading bloc explains the interest shown in the region by world leaders in the ongoing annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, which gathers in this town in the Swiss Alps more than 2,000 political, economic and civil society leaders.

The President is taking part in two discussions on Asean. The second to be held later today will discuss the achievements in the region over the past 40 years.

Consultancy firm Pricewaterhouse Coopers said in a briefing paper for the WEF that Asean has recovered remarkably well a decade since the financial meltdown that started in 1997.

The reasons include the growing trade with big markets like China and India, as well as the growing popularity as investment sites of countries like the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam.

"In the future, the Asean nations could find useful niches as safe havens for risk diversification for multinationals, with the right investment frameworks and policies, they will attract global manufacturing and services corporations eager to reduce the risks of supply chain disruptions or backlashes of protectionism that are mounting against China and India," the paper said.

Ratings upgrade

The prospect of an imminent sovereign ratings upgrade on the Philippines by global rating agencies has lifted the spirits of Filipino officials here eager to promote the country to the select group of business, political and other leaders gathered here for the WEF.

This is "a clear recognition that the Philippines is on the right track," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement here.

"This is indeed a boom year not only for the Philippine economy but for every Filipino household that will reap the fruits of more jobs, enterprise, peace and stability and a government delivering the goods in terms of health, education, food and infrastructure," he said.

Bunye made the statement following reports that the government's economic team was meeting with officials of Fitch Ratings, one of the three major rating agencies who act as global debt watchdogs, in hopes of a credit upgrade.

Sovereign ratings are assessments of the relative likelihood that a borrower government will default on its obligations. Governments seek credit ratings to ease their access to the international capital markets where many investors prefer rated securities.

The President, who last week asserted that 2007 would be a boom year for the Philippine economy, has said that she intends to bring the message to the more than 2,000 world leaders gathered here that the Philippines is ripe for trade and investment.

FOUNDING CHAIR of the World Economic Forum Klaus Schwab receives President Arroyo at the congress center prior to the WEF opening. A Swiss professor, Schwab founded the forum in 1971. MALACAÑANG PHOTO

To-do schedule

On Thursday, the President met with the first of a long list of international business executives on her to-do schedule on the sidelines of the WEF meeting.

Maurice A. Amon, co-executive chair of the Lausanne-based Sicpa Holdings, proposed investing in a security solutions system in the Philippines to help the government stamp out counterfeiting and smuggling.

Sicpa, a multinational company headquartered in Lausanne, is the leading global provider of security inks and solutions for most of the world's bank notes. It is also an expert in document security for protecting government products like passports, postage or excise stamps, checks or lottery tickets.

Amon said he was offering an integrated technology that will help the Philippine government to enforce its tax laws with greater efficiency and security.

Confidence in RP

"By this proposal, we are affirming our confidence in the Philippines as an investment site, and as a partner in a major cooperative undertaking," Amon said in a statement.

Sicpa, which has an 80-year history of being a trusted adviser to central banks, governments and high-security printers, will bear the costs of the investments involved in rolling out the proposed technology and infrastructure, under the build-operate-transfer scheme.

No figures were disclosed, however.

Sicpa is said to be the only company capable of creating an integrating system through "track and trace" and authentication solutions to protect products and documents of value, such as currencies and passports.

Some of its solutions in place in five continents allow for easy identification of counterfeit money and smuggled items, thus helping in raising customs revenues.

Amon later hosted dinner for Ms Arroyo attended by chief executive officers of some of the world's biggest companies.

The President is also scheduled to meet with executives from Credit Suisse, Citibank, Hinduja Group (Europe), AMAS Bank (Switzerland), Teletech, Intel Corp. and Union Fenosa.

Financial market experts, like the DBS and ING investment banks, believe a credit upgrade was "long overdue" for the Philippines.

The Singapore-based DBS noted in its latest analysis on the economy the Philippines' increasing capability to narrow its budget gap and the gains from a strong peso.

The government clearly hopes that the string of positive economic figures, including last year's budget deficit of about P62 billion, which was much lower than the targeted P125 billion, would make a favorable impression on the credit-rating agencies who act as the global debt watchdog.

Last year, the outlook on the Philippines' credit standing by all three major credit-rating firms—Fitch, Moody's Investors Service and Standard & Poor's—improved from "negative" to "stable."

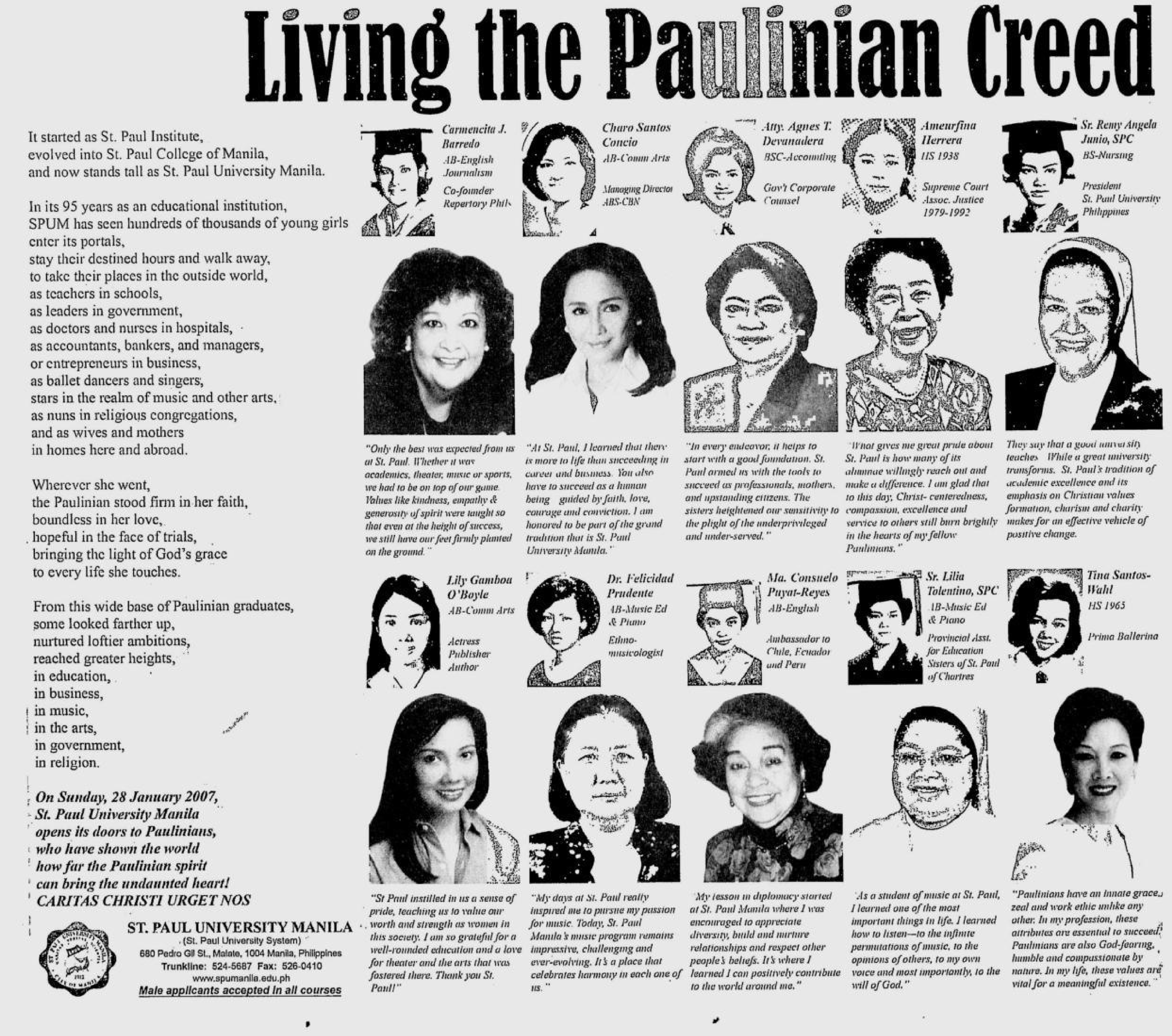
Below investment grade

But the country's sovereign credit standing with all three ratings firms remains below investment grade.

A ratings upgrade to near-investment grade will lead to lower borrowing costs for the government because of increased confidence that the country will meet its credit obligations and thus free up more more funds for social and infrastructure spending.

An improved assessment also reduces the country's risk premium from the perspective of foreign investors, who would thus be encouraged to bring in more direct investments and create more domestic job opportunities.

Besides Bunye, other Philippine officials and businessmen who were with the President during yesterday's meeting on Asean were Trade Secretary Peter Favila, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr., Corazon de la Paz of the Social Security System, Enrique Aboitiz of the Aboitiz group and Jaime Augusto and Fernando Zobel de Ayala of the Ayala group.



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bringing the light of God's grace
to every life she touches.

From this wide base of Paulinian graduates,
some looked farther up,
nurtured loftier ambitions,
reached greater heights,
in education,
in business,
in music,
in the arts,
in government,
in religion.

On Sunday, 28 January 2007,
St. Paul University Manila
opens its doors to Paulinians,
who have shown the world
how far the Paulinian spirit
can bring the undaunted heart!
CARITAS CHRISTI URGET NOS

Carmencita J. Barredo
AB-English Journalism
Co-founder Repertory Phils

"Only the best was expected from us at St. Paul. Whether it was academics, theater, music or sports, we had to be on top of our game. Values like kindness, empathy & generosity of spirit were taught so that even at the height of success, we still have our feet firmly planted on the ground."

Charo Santos Concio
AB-Comm Arts
Managing Director ABS-CBN

"At St. Paul, I learned that there is more to life than succeeding in career and business. You also have to succeed as a human being guided by faith, love, courage and conviction. I am honored to be part of the grand tradition that is St. Paul University Manila."

Atty. Agnes T. Devanadera
BSC-Accounting
Gov't Corporate Counsel

"In every endeavor, it helps to start with a good foundation. St. Paul armed us with the tools to succeed as professionals, mothers, and upstanding citizens. The sisters heightened our sensitivity to the plight of the underprivileged and under-served."

Ameurfina Herrera
HS 1938
Supreme Court Assoc. Justice 1979-1992

"What gives me great pride about St. Paul is how many of its alumnae willingly reach out and make a difference. I am glad that to this day, Christ- centeredness, compassion, excellence and service to others still burn brightly in the hearts of my fellow Paulinians."

Sr. Remy Angela Junio, SPC
BS-Nursing
President St. Paul University Philippines

They say that a good university teaches. While a great university transforms. St. Paul's tradition of academic excellence and its emphasis on Christian values formation, charism and charity makes for an effective vehicle of positive change.

Lily Gamboa O'Boyle
AB-Comm Arts
Actress Publisher Author

"St Paul instilled in us a sense of pride, teaching us to value our worth and strength as women in this society. I am so grateful for a well-rounded education and a love for theater and the arts that was fostered there. Thank you St. Paul!"

Dr. Felicidad Prudente
AB-Music Ed & Piano
Ethno-musicologist

"My days at St. Paul really inspired me to pursue my passion for music. Today, St. Paul Manila's music program remains impressive, challenging and ever-evolving. It's a place that celebrates harmony in each one of us."

Ma. Consuelo Puyat-Reyes
AB-English
Ambassador to Chile, Ecuador and Peru

"My lesson in diplomacy started at St. Paul Manila where I was encouraged to appreciate diversity, build and nurture relationships and respect other people's beliefs. It's where I learned I can positively contribute to the world around me."

Sr. Lilia Tolentino, SPC
AB-Music Ed & Piano
Provincial Asst. for Education Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres

"As a student of music at St. Paul, I learned one of the most important things in life. I learned how to listen—to the infinite permutations of music, to the opinions of others, to my own voice and most importantly, to the will of God."

Tina Santos-Wahl
HS 1965
Prima Ballerina

"Paulinians have an innate grace, zeal and work ethic unlike any other. In my profession, these attributes are essential to succeed. Paulinians are also God-fearing, humble and compassionate by nature. In my life, these values are vital for a meaningful existence."

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EDITORIAL

JOSEPH ESTRADA SAYS HE IS "THE LAST MAN standing for the truth." But even the disgraced former president's die-hard fans and supporters might find it hard to swallow, now that Charlie "Atong" Ang is accusing him of skimming P70 million from the share of farmers from the excise tax on tobacco in 1998. What is more believable is that he is the last man claiming innocence in a triumvirate of graft and corruption.

The third member of their group was actually the first to come forward and confess the crime. That was Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, and he did it in October 2000, triggering an impeachment trial and later a people uprising that forced Estrada to step down from the presidency three months later. Singson said he and Ang had encashed a check worth P130 million and delivered the money to Estrada's house in Greenhills, San Juan, but Ang only turned over P70 million to Estrada. When Estrada demanded where the rest of the money went, Ang said he had given P20 million to Estrada's wife Luisa "Loi" Ejercito (who is now a senator) and P15 million to their son Jinggoy (also a senator now) and kept P25 million for himself, according to Singson.

Estrada has repeatedly denied Singson's claim, which forms part of the P4-billion plunder case filed in April 2001 against the deposed president and several others, Ang included. But Ang who branded Singson's allegation as a lie during the impeachment trial has turned around and confirmed the story. The confirmation is contained in a plea bargain agreement wherein Ang agreed to return the P25 million and testify in cases about which he has "personal knowledge" in exchange for the downgrading of the charge against him from plunder to bribery.

Curiously, Ang will no longer be called to testify against Estrada. Prosecutors said it is too late to present him as a witness because the government has already rested its case. Anyway, they added, the government was able to build a strong case even without Ang's testimony.

But if the case against Estrada is strong, then Ang is just as certain to grow old in jail, being Estrada's co-accused. And if his testimony is no longer necessary to clinch the case against the former president, what more important purpose does the plea bargain agreement serve? Why should one of the principals in our history's most celebrated graft case, someone who caused the government much trouble and expense to get extradited after he fled to the United States, be allowed to get away with a light penalty if his cooperation is of very limited value to the government?

No matter what the lawyers say, the fact is that whether he is called to testify in the trial or not, Ang's confirmation of the P130 million scam can only strengthen the case against Estrada. Two self-confessed partners in crime, pointing their fingers at their boss, present an almost unassailable argument for conviction, both in the court of law and in the court of public opinion. And the administration has achieved both, even if Malacañang officials continue to profess ignorance about the deal cut with Ang by government prosecutors and approved by Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez.

Whatever its effect on the Estrada case or the coming elections, Ang's somersault should put fear in the hearts of corrupt officials. For when the long arm of the law holds someone by the throat, the loyalty of cronies can get crushed in the process.

Now it is Ang being brought back to face the music and the singing. When will Jocelyn Bolante come home and come clean on the P728-million fertilizer scam?

Marooned

FOREIGN COMMENT

IT MUST BE SAID GEORGE BUSH DID HIS BEST ON TUESDAY night in Washington as he faced a Congress heavy with Democrats and at least 10 presidential hopefuls. Indeed, applying his best gravitas and Churchillian rhetoric, he had this to say about Iraq: "On this day, at this hour, it is still within our power to shape the outcome of this battle. So let us find our resolve and turn events toward victory."

Bush is caught between the impossibility of his beliefs and the harsh realities of the political and public opinion he continues seriously to misjudge. To him, Iraq is a war in which America can be victorious; to much of the wider world, it is a diabolical mess that has to be cleaned up, not won. The President is marooned; America is isolated. *The Age (Melbourne, Australia)*

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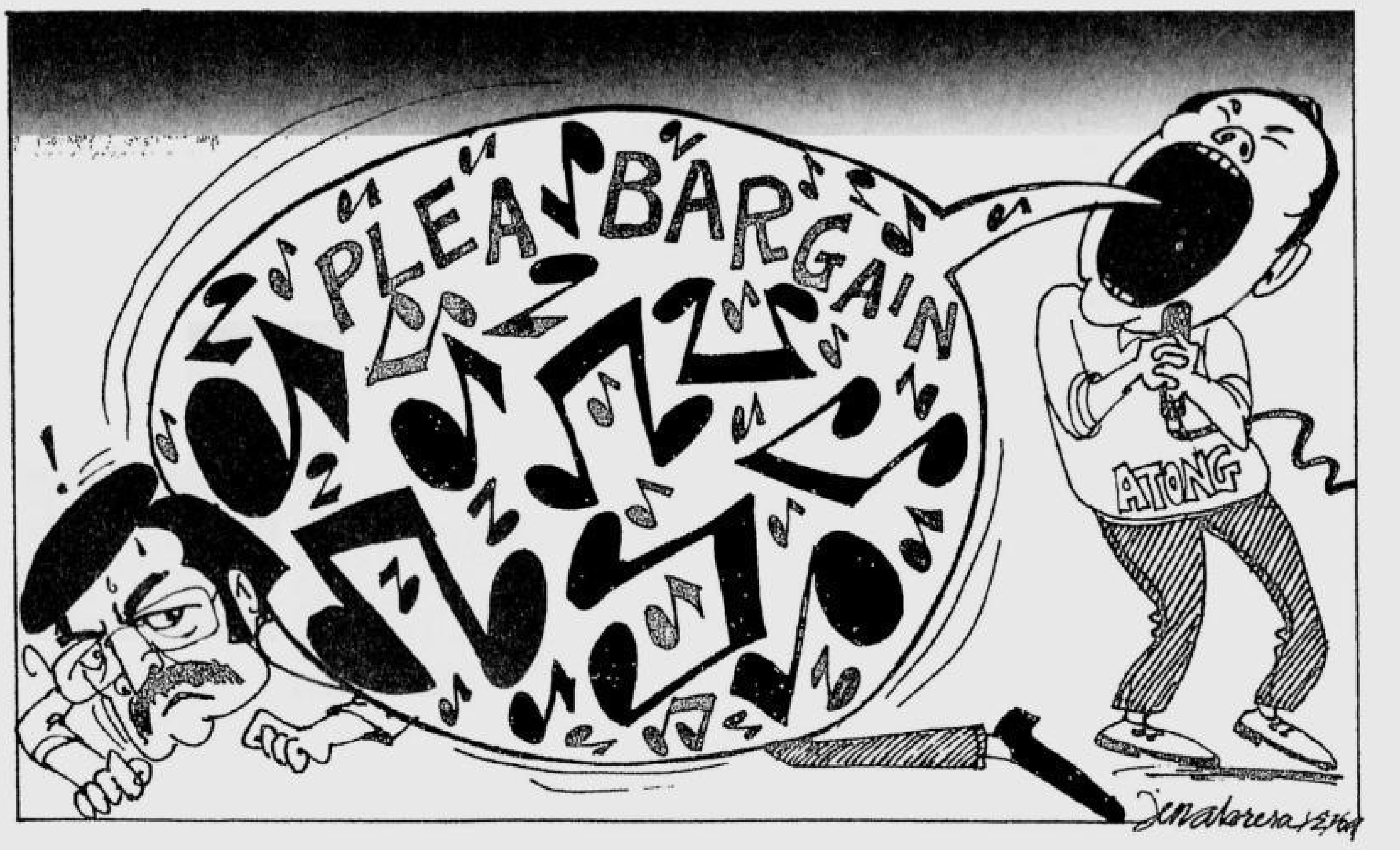

'Locus standi'

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

LOCUS STANDI IS A JUDICIAL CONCEPT that has caused not a little confusion even among lawyers because of its inconsistent application by the courts of justice, particularly the Supreme Court. It is often applied by judges as an excuse for not deciding a case notwithstanding the importance of the issues raised and the urgent necessity to rule upon them.

As one of the essential requisites for the exercise of the power of judicial review, *locus standi* imports, according to the case of Senate v. Executive Secretary Ermita, 488 SCRA 1, that "the person challenging the act must have standing to challenge the validity of the subject act or issuance; otherwise stated, he must have a personal and substantial interest in the case, such that he has sustained, or will sustain, direct injury as a result of its enforcement."

In Lozada v. Commission on Elections, 120 SCRA 227, the Supreme Court held that the petitioners were not proper parties to compel the respondent to call special elections to fill 12 vacancies in the legislature because they had only a "generalized interest" in the problem shared with the rest of the people.

In criminal cases, the offended party is regarded as only the principal witness for the prosecution, which represents not him but the State itself or, as the information would put it, the People of the Philippines. The theory is that when a crime is committed, it is the State whose laws are violated and therefore has the right to go against the wrongdoer.

A special rule governs prosecution for private crimes, like adultery, concubinage, and rape, which cannot be filed without the prior complaint of the offended party. Before, the ordinary taxpayer was not considered to have a substantial interest in the validity of an appropriation law. Now, however, he is allowed to question it on the assumption that he has contributed to the public funds to be spent regardless of the amount of the taxes he has paid.

In the first Emergency Powers Case, 84 Phil. 368, the Supreme Court declared: "The transcendental importance of these cases to the public demands that they be acted promptly and definitely, brushing aside, if we must, technicalities of procedure." This has given convenient latitude to judges to apply or brush aside technicalities of procedure on the requirement of *locus standi*. A case in point is Kilosbayan v. Morato where in 232 SCRA 111, the Supreme Court decided that the petitioner was a proper party and in 249 SCRA 628, involving the same subject, held that it was not.

The original case against the constitutionality of Mayor Alfredo Lim's posting or painting of signs on certain houses as occupied by persons convicted or suspected of drug trafficking was remanded by the Supreme Court to a regional trial court. Despite the important questions raised, the judge held that the Commission on Human Rights and the Mabini, an association of concerned lawyers, did not have *locus standi*. The Court of Appeals reversed the RTC and Lim appealed to the Supreme Court. The case was later dismissed "on technical grounds" in a minute resolution.

A worse case of judicial cop-out was Guazon v. De Villa 181 SCRA 623, where residents in several depressed communities in Metro Manila were subjected by policemen and soldiers to the so-called "areal saturation drives," more notoriously identified with the "zona" during the Japanese Occupation. The protests filed on their behalf by their barangay and other leaders were dismissed by the Supreme Court on the ground that the alleged victims themselves should have complained as the real proper parties.

In my dissent, I argued that the outraged citizens were the "little people" who had neither the means nor the courage to defy the government, which was why they sought the assistance of the petitioners. I said that if a house was on fire, it was not only its owner who had the right to call the firemen but other persons as well who had a personal reason to prevent the fire from spreading. But that point was summarily dismissed by my colleagues who merely applied the generally accepted meaning of *locus standi*.

I humbly submit that where a violation of the Constitution is involved, any citizen should be able to submit it to a court of justice for resolution. The case should not be simply dismissed for lack of party standing. All of us have a personal interest in the integrity of our fundamental law, and it is this attachment that should give every competent Filipino the right and duty to defend it. That responsibility should give him *locus standi*.

A new paradigm for global partnership

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

GENEVA—EVERYONE WHO IS ANYONE—AS well as the wannabes in the political and business world—seems to be in Davos for the World Economic Forum. But there are also several other meetings going on here in Geneva, which have potentially greater impact on our the lives, plain joes. Yours truly is attending one of them, which has the impressive sounding title of "High Level Task Force on the Implementation of the Right to Development."

Right to Development? What is that? One may well ask. And rightly so, because it has been more breached than observed, or—perhaps more accurately—ignored, for various reasons, mostly political; and also because it just hasn't been understood, although the Declaration on the Right to Development (RtD) was adopted by the United Nations in 1986.

But now there is a Human Rights Council, and nine years ago a Working Group on the Right to Development was created, which in turn created three years ago a High Level Task Force on a particular aspect of its implementation. The Task Force has recommended to the Working Group certain criteria for the periodic evaluation of global partnerships as identified in Millennium Development Goal 8 (MDG 8) from the perspective of the RtD. The Working Group, in turn, recommended these criteria to the Human Rights Council, which endorsed them; and the next step now is to operationalize the criteria, which is where I came in as a member of the Task Force's third session.

But before I go into that, let me just share with you the observation that for sheer it-takes-your-breath-away, it is hard to beat the sight of a world blanketed in pure white—particularly in a place as scenic as Geneva. The all-white and glittering décor of Christmas trees are nothing compared to the real thing after 24 hours of softly falling snow. The wonder of it.

Now back to the main story. You may not have been aware of it, but when the MDG (approved by the UN at the turn of the century) came out, it was noted that seven out of the eight goals, and the targets attached to them, involved only developing countries, as if the developed world had no responsibility in the matter.

Only the eighth goal includes the developed world, concerned as it is with "Develop (ing) A Global Partnership for Development." Issues of trade, finance, debt, aid to landlocked and small island countries, essential drugs from pharmaceuticals, youth employment, and science and technology transfer are included in this goal, which is all very well and good. The problem is that while all the other goals involving the developing countries have time-bound and measurable targets, this is not the case for global partnerships; in effect, letting the developed countries off the hook. And even then, I am informed, the United States refuses to accept that goal (there goes Dubya again).

What the Task Force (of which I am a member) is mandated to do is to apply the RtD criteria to three selected global partnerships identified with MDG 8.

Ho hum? Think again. One of the partnerships we discussed is the so-called "African Peer Review Mechanism" (APRM). And what an eye-opener it was.

The world is used to thinking of Africa as the pits, as far as development is concerned, and there is basis for such perception—most African countries are at the bottom of the country rankings of the Human Development Index (we are about in the middle). But from "out of Africa" has come out a scheme that is getting widespread attention and admiration. It has been described by one colleague as a new paradigm for global partnership—a model of what all global partnerships should be like.

What exactly is the APRM? It is a self-assessment instrument by a country on its political, economic and corporate governance, as well as its socio-economic development—but with a difference. First, the country's self-assessment is not done only by the government, but with the widest possible participation of civil society and the private sector. This self-assessment is based on a questionnaire that is about as exhaustive as one can imagine (questions covering 93 indicators); and it is the basis of a plan of action, again formulated with the participation of all sectors of society.

The country submits its self-assessment and its action plan for review by an outside team overseen by a panel of eminent persons known for their probity, competence and integrity. The panel members are appointed by a committee of the participating heads of state. (The panel includes three women, one of whom is its chair.) The review team goes to the country, holds wide-ranging consultations with all sectors, writes its own report which is then responded to by the government of the country involved. The report is submitted to the heads of state and government, and is reviewed by them.

Here's the kicker: If the government of the country in question shows a will to correct its shortcomings, then all the participating governments (it is voluntary, but 25 countries representing 75 percent of the African population, have acceded) provide as much assistance as it can, including urging donor governments and agencies to give aid. If the government of the country is recalcitrant, peer pressure kicks in, together with a threat of stronger (unspecified) action. What is more, the country's progress on its action program is periodically reviewed.

A program proudly made by Africans for Africans. And it is working.

Graciousness and civility in US Congress

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

AS I WATCHED US PRESIDENT BUSH'S RE-cent State of the Union Address on CNN, I couldn't help but feel a tinge of envy at the civility and graciousness with which the administration and opposition members treated him and one another, despite their bitter disagreements over the war in Iraq. What a contrast to the poisoned politics of bitterness and petty wrangling practiced here.

* * *

First, all the members showed up, except for two who were ill and for whom Bush asked for prayers. Secondly, even the Democrats, who are now in control of both chambers of Congress, applauded Bush on many issues. The Democrats won control of Congress on the Iraq war issue and they have not minced words about their objection to sending more troops to the war-torn country. Thus, to a man, the Democrats in Congress met with stony silence Bush's appeal to send 21,000 more troops to stabilize Iraq—a foreshadowing of the bitter fight over this issue.

In spite of that, Bush was applauded and given standing ovations by both the Democrats and the Republicans as he touched on domestic issues, especially the need to uphold the welfare and security of their nation, and to support those fighting for their country abroad. The cameras, which sometimes focused on Sen. John Kerry (Bush's opponent in the 2004 presidential race), as well as on Sen. Hillary Clinton and Sen. Barack Obama (any of the two could end up fighting the Republican candidate for president in 2008), and other Democratic Party leaders, showed all of them repeatedly giving him a standing ovation.

* * *

By contrast, in our country, many members of the political opposition have consistently boycotted the President's Sona, especially in the last two years. The rare few who attended would never be caught applauding, even when the issues raised were motherhood or non-partisan statements. To the opposition, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo must be opposed no matter what and on whatever issue she espouses. But preferably she must be kicked out of office.

* * *

Bush, in a superb show of theatrics designed obviously to jack up his sagging popularity, had three ordinary citizens who have done exemplary deeds seated in the gallery, next to First Lady Laura Bush. Of the three, the most stirring story was that of black American construction worker Wesley Autrey. He was with his young daughters when a film student had a seizure on a New York subway platform and fell on to the train tracks. As a train approached, Autrey jumped in and lay on top of the student, pressing him into a foot-deep space to keep him from being hit by the train. Five coaches had run over them before the train screeched to a stop, just inches above Autrey's head, even leaving grease on his knit cap. Bush said that if America can produce such heroes, there must be something great about their land. The US Congress rose to its feet in prolonged applause.

* * *

We in the Philippines are not lacking in heroism. In fact, as I listened to that story about Autrey, I recalled what the late Jesuit scholastic, Bro. Richie Fernando, did in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, a decade ago. Richie taught at a skills training school for poor Cambodians. One day, he came in and saw a crazed student starting to throw a grenade inside the classroom. Richie embraced the guy and shouted to the others to run out of the room. The grenade blew up and tore his body to shreds, though the assailant was unharmed. A memorial was built to honor his heroism in the Cambodian school, but here, except for a paragraph or two in the local papers, few heard about his story. We need to toast our own heroes.

* * *

Over dzRH, Ambassador Marciano Paynor, secretary general of the national organizing committee for the Asean Summit, recounted how the problem of accommodating all the VIPs was mercifully solved despite Cebu's shortage of rooms. The Japanese prime minister, his staff and the media accompanying him took out 250 rooms at the Hilton Cebu Resort Hotel owned by Manny H. Osmeña. Asean's only monarch, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei, got the presidential suite at Mactan Shangri-La, while Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, got the second best suite. Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, Australian Prime Minister John Howard and New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark were all billeted at the Marco Polo, while Korean President Roh Moo-hyun, was at the Waterfront Hotel in Lahug, together with the foreign minister of Timor Leste and French Minister for European concerns Katherine Colonna. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, was at the Marriott. GMA, as host, took the least-impressive unit at the first floor of the Mactan Shangri-La, which was converted into a suite. Security was a problem during the Summit, but as Paynor pointed out, it was his good fortune to work with retired Gen. Leo Alvez (they both served under President Fidel Ramos and coordination between them was easy).

* * *

Taguig Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano obviously wanted to prolong the House ethics committee hearings (it was giving him all the mileage for his Senate candidacy). But it was also obvious that he was just "trawl-fishing," as First Gentleman Mike Arroyo's lawyer put it. The Munich bank where he said the Arroyos owned an account has already said officially that no such account exists. Caught without a shred of evidence, he shifted to another tack: Arroyo should sign a waiver to allow scrutiny of his other accounts elsewhere in the world. There is a sense of fairness in even the most unprincipled person, and while many may not be fond of Mike Arroyo, they know this sense is being violated in Cayetano's unfounded accusation. I don't know why the ethics committee took so long to dismiss his antics. And now comes this harebrained idea to send a five-member committee to look into the veracity of the alleged Munich account. This junket must not be allowed.

The simple life

HIGH BLOOD

Cecilia Tobias Lopez

WE'D also like to know the concerns of the sixtysomething and above, what makes their blood pressure rise or makes them sit back, content that all's well with their world and with themselves. —Ed.

MOST OF MY CHILDHOOD WAS SPENT IN Mindanao. My family first lived in a lumber concession in Davao. When the Japanese invaded the Philippines, we joined my father's eldest sister and her family in Cotabato. As a bride, my aunt had settled with her husband in a little town quaintly named Pigcawayan.

Toward the end of the war, my father decided to bring his family back to Manila in answer to his father's summons. However, we got stranded in Zamboanga as the battle for the liberation of Manila reached fever pitch.

Not too long after our return to Manila, my father shipped his family back to Cotabato as he could not afford to support us on his small salary.

We lived in a rather remarkable farm developed by my aunt's husband. An agriculturist, he had the farm planted to seedless mandarin oranges that were unbelievably sweet, seedless mabolos, and avocados that had thick, golden flesh that was smooth and creamy. Rice and corn were the main crops of the farm, but the orchard provided us kids our major source of delights—climbing trees, picking fruits, idling on tree branches, or playing numerous children's games under the trees. Bananas of several varieties proliferated on the farm. What we could not consume or give away, we fed to the pigs. That was why, some time later, back in Manila, I was shocked when I paid 10 centavos for a small bowl of shaved ice, milk, syrup and a single banana.

Viewed from Manila standards even then, conditions were primitive not only at the farm but in most of Mindanao. No electricity, no running water. We dug a well in the yard and depended on it for washing clothes, bathing, drinking and watering the plants. Our drinking water was religiously boiled by my mother. We depended on kerosene lamps for light and firewood for cooking. My mother had commissioned a tenant to build her a roasting spit over which we happily broiled chicken, fish and other meat. To roast corn, we would build a bonfire and toss the corn, husk and all, into the fire. We did the same with *camote* and bananas.

We retired early. On stormy nights, my mother would gather us kids around her and tell us horror stories that sent us screaming and diving under the blankets.

During harvest time for rice or corn, the children were allowed to participate. What we harvested we were allowed to keep and sell for pocket money. Buying goodies with our own money was a heady experience. And speaking of harvest, one of our tenants regularly harvested *tuba* in the afternoons. Do you know how sweet freshly harvested *tuba* is? My mother would usually beat an egg yolk in a glassful of *tuba* to produce a healthy tonic (or so she said).

The highlight of our bucolic existence was the weekly arrival of the Hiligaynon, the Ilonggo edition of the Liwayway magazine (usually a month late, coming all the way from Manila). We would troop to the only *sari-sari* store in our community. I had been commissioned to do the weekly readings. Surrounded by the neighborhood elders and children of various ages, I would read the serialized novels in the magazine, complete with histrionic effects—anger, sadness, humor. My audience lapped it up.

Life was basic, life was simple, but life in Cotabato provided me a fantastic childhood. I have never again known such a stess-free existence. We found joy and pleasure in the simplest of things. Walking was the primary "means of transportation," and the walks gave us the opportunity to communicate with Mother Nature and to enjoy the blessings she scattered along the way—wild berries, dragonflies that we chased among wild blooms, the chirping birds, young rice from which we sucked the milky, unformed grain. Modern life as we know it now was eons away.

A way of life so dependent on technology and gadgetry has terrible drawbacks when faced with nature's fury. Recent calamities have amply demonstrated this. Life just stops when power fails. No light, no water, no TV, no air conditioners, no computers, no telephones, not even the minimal comfort provided by an electric fan. The wailings from the old and the young alike could make up the chorus in one of the great Greek tragedies.

At times like these, I look back to my childhood in Cotabato. Wistfully, I yearn for the simplicity of it all, when life was uncomplicated and sheer pleasure could be found in just being alive and being content with what Mother Nature bestowed on us.

Cecilia Tobias Lopez, 69, is a retired government employee. She worked part-time as a speech writer at the Philippine National Police, and as an editor of the newsletter of the AFP Officers Village Association Inc.

Navigating Lebanon's political minefield

WORLD VIEW

Yezid Sayigh

ON THE FACE OF IT, THE DONOR CONFErence of Western and oil-rich Arab nations in Paris this week merely continues the work of two previous multilateral conferences in 2001 and 2002, which were aimed at helping Lebanon to rebuild its infrastructure after years of civil war and Israeli occupation, and to tackle its massive debt. This time, donors will additionally help offset the $3.5 billion in direct and indirect losses caused by last summer's war between Israel and Hezbollah, and the further rise of debt to $40.6 billion, a staggering 180 percent of Lebanon's GDP.

The agenda appears straightforward, but "Paris III" has acquired a barely concealed political purpose: to bolster the government of Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora in the face of a powerful domestic challenge led by Hezbollah; and by extension, to curb the influence of Hezbollah's regional backers, Syria and Iran.

The West should tread carefully. There is a real risk that it will become entangled as a partisan actor in Lebanese domestic politics. Nor should it seek to play into the regional agendas of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan—hardly paragons of democracy—which are anxious to confront what they portray as a menacing "arc" of Shi'a Muslim power extending from Iran to Lebanon via Syria and Iraq.

Consider this. The United States and France, which have taken the West's lead on Lebanon, have both confirmed the "democratic and constitutional nature" of the Siniora government. This is true, but only up to a point; for Lebanon's confessional-based political system assigns the Shi'a, who make up close to 40 percent of the population, only 21 percent of parliamentary seats. The Sunnis, who comprise at most 20 percent of the population, are given the state office with the greatest executive power, that of prime minister.

Furthermore, the Sunni-based, anti-Syrian Future Movement, to which Siniora belongs, effectively extended this inequity into the present parliament when it overrode the opposition and insisted on conducting the 2005 general elections on the basis of the Electoral Law gerrymandered by Syria in 2000.

The West should therefore be wary of dismissing the Lebanese opposition out of hand as the cat's paw of Syria and Iran. Rather, it should welcome proposals by the Arab League mediators for immediate electoral reform and early parliamentary elections. At the same time, it should expect the opposition to endorse the establishment of an international tribunal to adjudicate the matter of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, albeit after clarifying and narrowing the current, excessively broad United Nations rules governing the investigation.

The West should also recognize that the constituencies of Hezbollah and its allied, largely Christian, Free Patriotic Movement, led by presidential contender Michel Aoun, will be hit hardest by many of Siniora's proposed economic and administrative reforms, such as lifting fuel subsidies and sharply raising value added tax. Already the 200,000-member Federation of Labour Unions has joined the opposition bandwagon, and Siniora's proposals will further fuel grassroots, populist nationalism.

All this might be seen as a predictable, conservative reaction to urgently needed reforms, were it not for the poor track record of the Sunni economic establishment, which for many years adapted well enough to Syrian domination. Part of Hariri's legacy was the award of quasi-monopolistic licences to cronies—for mobile telephones, for example—and the sale of government debt at highly profitable rates to local banks in which he had a direct interest. So were the profligate borrow-and-spend policies and the use of public-sector hiring to co-opt political factions, both of which resulted in Lebanon's massive debt problem.

Yet the real challenge for Western policy in Lebanon is neither constitutional reform nor the establishment of the Hariri tribunal. The Siniora government and the opposition are likely to reach a compromise within the next few months, probably on the basis of some variant of the Arab League proposals. The tougher challenge is to solve the Gordian knot that binds Hezbollah (and the issue of its disarmament), Syria and Israel together in a fateful triangle.

In short, the West needs to pre-empt a resumption of hostilities in Lebanon by seeking unconditional talks between Syria and Israel over the Golan Heights. Failing that, Paris III will represent a sidestepping of the key political issues that must be addressed, and thus will merely stock up trouble for the future. ***Project Syndicate***

Yezid Sayigh is professor of Middle East Studies at King's College London.

Fading memories

YOUNG BLOOD

Renette Glory R. Domingo

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

IN A FEW MONTHS, I'LL BE TURNING 26, EXACTLY THE same age when my Kuya died of lung cancer. I was only 11 years old then, and at that innocent age, 26 seemed, well, old. Not exactly old enough to die, but old enough to have done whatever you wanted to do in your life. After all, you've already lived a quarter of a century. But now that I'm approaching that age, I realize that 26 is way too early to have to deal with your mortality.

Sadly, 13 years after his death, I discover that my memories of Kuya Ezer are beginning to fade. I am both ashamed and bothered by it, but that's the way it is. Apparently, seeing a person every day for 11 years is not enough to ensure that you would remember how he looks like when he's gone. If it weren't for the many pictures we have of him (he was thankfully into photography), I probably would not remember his face now.

But I do remember some things about him. For one, I recall that he had an acne problem when he was younger. He would pound penicillin tablets to mix with his astringent and use a special kind of soap for his face (I think it was called Neko or something). I don't know if I remember the penicillin or the soap because I actually saw them among his beauty products, or from stories told by Diko Rey, my other brother, who is a year younger than him. But strangely enough, I distinctly remember the acne itself, those flaming red spots all over his face.

I remember that he had a curious way of cupping my chin when he was feeling affectionate. My favorite picture of us together was taken when he was already bed-ridden and in his pajamas. It shows me wearing my favorite red shirt and lying beside him, and he is smiling a little and cupping my chin.

Kuya Ezer was a voracious reader. He would underline or highlight words that he didn't understand so that he could look it up in a dictionary later on. He was obsessively concerned about correct grammar and spelling and pronunciation. Once he prepared and taught a summer program on English proficiency for my sister and me.

Every day he taught us a new word, its meaning and its proper use. I think he scoured the dictionary and selected interesting words to learn. We began with A. We learned the meanings of "alight," and "averse," and "adverse," and "altogether," and other interesting A words. I think we reached C, but we had to stop because he got sick then. The Big C is such a spoilsport. If it weren't for that hateful, traitorous disease, I'd now be adept at using words beginning with Z.

I remember that he was a skillful writer as well. He was always writing news articles and opinion columns for the newsletters he produced for our church. After he got sick, he wrote open letters to churches asking for prayers, and personal letters to his doctors.

On his last night alive, I went home with a copy of the UP Integrated School high school newspaper, where a poem I had written was published—the only grade-school contribution in the entire paper. I went to his air-conditioned room and looked at him, but he was breathing out of an oxygen mask, and he seemed to be asleep, so I didn't tell him I got "published." But my parents were there, and I told them, and now as I remember the moment, I hope he heard what I said.

Maybe if I knew that that would be the last time I'd see him alive, I would have done things a little differently. Maybe I wouldn't have been so proud of myself because getting a poem published isn't nearly as important as losing a brother. Or maybe I would have awakened him to tell him about the poem, because he was a writer as well, and he would have been proud of me for sure. Or maybe I would never even have mentioned the poem altogether and I would have just gone to him and thanked him for encouraging me to read and for teaching me grammar, and setting an example of what faith really meant. Or maybe I would have said goodbye and kissed him and told him I loved him, and that he didn't have to worry about my parents and my brother, and my sister and me, because we would be OK, and that we would see him again someday in heaven.

It was a blessing that all this happened when I was only 11, because at that age you don't really understand much of what's going on. Even so, the death of a brother still scars you and scares you about going through another death in the family. Because death means you'll never see a person again, and you'll never be able to talk to him again. But now I realize that memories gradually fade over time, but feelings never do.

It seems unfair to me to write about Kuya Ezer, and some of my memories of him, when I have another brother who died two years before I was born. Sangko Rene was only six years old when he died of hemorrhagic fever four days before Christmas. He was sick for less than a week, so his death came as a real shock. I was named after him.

I'm sure Sanko Rene was thrilled when he saw our Kuya entering the gates of heaven. I've always pictured him running toward the familiar face and tugging at Kuya's hand to show him around. Then he takes Kuya to go see Jesus and all questions are answered and everything is explained and nothing else matters because they are face to face with their Savior, their Master and their Healer.

Renette Glory R. Domingo, 25, is a BS Economics graduate of the University of the Philippines in Diliman and now works at Hongkong Shanghai Banking Corp. in Makati.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

THEY SAID

Cowed supporters

"People here are silent but I assure you they are behind (Abra Rep. Luis Jr.) Bersamin. They are just afraid."

—Bangued, Abra resident Eugene Biscarra

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Between Scylla and Charybdis

FROM "GREEK MYTHOLOGY," one may recall the sea monsters Scylla and Charybdis facing each other from each side of the strait of Messina between Italy and Sicily. Scylla was a woman with six heads and 12 feet that looked like those of dogs. Fellow monster Charybdis was a whirlpool maker. Hapless sailors fell victims to either one of them.

If we were to believe the illegitimacy and ruthlessness of the Arroyo presidency and the possible return of the clout of the Estrada presidency, then we would indeed be worse than being between the devil and the deep blue sea. We would be between Scylla and Charybdis, so to speak. And if they are the only choices the electorate could have, who should we turn to?

The Makati Business Club (MBC), a staunch critic of the Arroyo administration, seems to get a sense of the political horizon by stating: "When things seem to be looking good, such as what we have now, with the economy posting sustained growth and the financial markets trading with a very bullish tone, there is a tendency to brush aside issues of governance and accountability for fear of unsettling the situation and derailing the economy's financial markets' positive momentum."

The MBC, it appears, fears that the business sector would ignore the club's call for "greater reform in governance" in the face of the recent positive developments in the economy that are difficult to mess up with, even with the opposition's trite comment that such gains have not trickled down to the people.

The mid-term Philippine elections should prove to be a make-or-break situation for both the administration and the opposition. Would the electorate gloss over the legitimacy issue given the economic strides Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's presidency is making, or would the voters risk entrusting everything to politicians who have placed their stakes with the Estrada camp? This question is probably the reason why the likes of Senators Manny Villar, Ralph Recto and Joker Arroyo are toying with the idea of a "Third Force."

We need to chart a future that bypasses the strait between Scylla and Charybdis. So help us, God.

—ARMANDO BATARA,
24 D. Tuazon St., BF Homes II,
Parañaque City

Why the priests' silence on Bersamin's killing?

I AM A CONCERNED PARISHioner of Mt. Carmel Church where Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr.was assassinated.

Why is it that up to now the priests of Mt. Carmel Church, or the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, or the parishioners have not raised their voices about the incident, demanding from Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the police authorities to live up to their oath to protect the citizens?

The Church is supposed to be a sacred and safe sanctuary for all people. Why are the people, even the priests who are supposed to be the guardians of our souls, so silent on the killing? Are they so afraid?

Their silence is deafening. That's why GMA and her corrupt officials are not ashamed of their greedy and plunderous ways.

I am shocked, appalled and ashamed to see the parishioners of Mt. Carmel Church who belong to rich families, cowering in silence. The country cannot be far behind.

—MANUEL REYES,
New Manila, Quezon City

Advertising RP as global wimp

WHAT'S THIS? RETURNING Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith to US custody just because the American government threatened to cancel the RP-US joint military exercises? Has the Arroyo administration lost all sense of self-respect, dignity and honor?

From the beginning, it has shown nothing but hostility to Smith's victim. The (in)justice secretary even went overboard by portraying the victim as a "flirt" begging to be had. But here, it is the Arroyo administration who literally is bending over and letting the United States shove it.

I will not be surprised if this surrendering of Smith to US custody becomes a guidepost for other nations on how to treat the Philippine government in the future.

The Arroyo administration itself is advertising that the Philippines can be humiliated, screwed and shafted in every possible way. Just watch how China will always demand the immediate release of their citizens caught poaching in Palawan. Disgusting!

—DIEGO MONICO,
mikeyyekim2002@hotmail.com

Questions re Janjalani interview

THIS IS A REACTION TO OCTAvio Dinampo's interview with Khadaffy Janjalani. (PDI, 1/22/07)

According to Dinampo (a professor of Mindanao State University [MSU]-Sulu), in his February 2006 interview with Janjalani, the latter told him that "they received from me and Ramzi Yousef P6 million in exchange for sending volunteers to Afghanistan." This is completely false. May I offer some clarification.

1. It is common knowledge that the Soviet Union left Afghanistan in 1989, the year the Abu Sayyaf broke into the news in the Philippines. It means that the jihad was already over in Afghanistan. The conflict in Afghanistan became a civil war that pitted the Afghans against each other.

Osama bin Laden himself had left Afghanistan and gone back to Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden went to Sudan in 1991 and returned only to Afghanistan in 1998 or thereabout. I left Afghanistan in 1986 after my disagreement with him, and we have been apart from each other since then. In 1998, I was in Saudi, not in the Philippines; and in case somebody has forgotten, Yousef was by then already in US custody. So what volunteers was Dinampo talking about? To whom could have I sent them?

2. If Janjalani were alive today, he should be around 31 years old. That means he was only 14 years old in 1989, about the time he allegedly received money from me. Or even if it was already 1992, he would still have been in his teenage years. Does this make any sense?

3. Dinampo, who was conducting a research about the Abu Sayyaf, got this information in February 2006. Why did he not contact me? How can we now verify the validity of this claim, considering that most of the people he mentioned are dead? I am still alive, not in hiding—and anybody who wants reliable information can reach me and he/she is most welcome.

4. Is Dinampo aware of the official letter I sent to President Macapagal-Arroyo in July 2001, where I offered my help and assistance to the government of the Philippines? If not, I advice him to read it. I can provide him a copy of the letter.

5. I have never given any money to any person or group, and certainly not to the Abu Sayyaf.

6. With regard to Yousef, it has already been proven in US and Jordan courts—not just before the media—that I have no relationship with him.

—JAMAL KHALIFA,
khalifa_jamal@yahoo.com

SAIL SALE
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Bumiyahe: Feb. 12 - March 15, 2007
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TO VISAYAS
Bacolod, Cebu, Coron, Dumaguete, Iloilo, Puerto Princesa, and Tagbilaran
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Time for another snap presidential election

AS FAR AS THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION (BI) is concerned, we are back under martial law. As shown in the case of Fr. Frank Nally, the bureau has appropriated again for itself the authority to deport foreigners, using the dirty tricks of the Marcos regime. Father Nally, a Columban priest, did the country a great service by showing a member of Parliament of the United Kingdom the environmental damage done by big-scale mining around the country. When Father Nally came back to the Philippines for a visit to the parishes he had served as a missionary, he was told that his name was in the blacklist of undesirable aliens, and the next morning he was unceremoniously put on the plane back to Hong Kong.

That is exactly what happened to me 34 years ago, when Marcos declared martial law. The BI had been "re-baptized" Bureau of Immigration and Deportation. Edmundo Reyes, the immigration commissioner that time, advised me to leave the country voluntarily after I had angered the Marcos regime for defending the rights of the workers during a strike in an electric company in Mindanao. Reyes promised me that I could come back after six months. To that effect, he issued me a reentry permit which, however, turned out to be fake and invalid. Upon my arrival at the Manila International Airport—after a six-month holiday—I was shown a list of undesirable aliens and my name appeared there. Right away I was whisked to a plane bound for Hong Kong. It took my superior and some Catholic bishops six weeks to persuade Reyes to allow me to enter the country again—but this time, as a tourist.

For the Arroyo administration, foreigners are welcome in the country as long as they bring in dollars to invest in the Philippines or to donate to charitable projects. But if they are critical of the government or fight for the rights of the poor, they are called undesirable aliens. It reminds me of what the late Bishop Dom Helder Camera once said: "When I gave food to the poor they called me a saint, but when I asked why are the poor poor they called me a communist."

The hunting season for "communists" is open again. It is time to call for another snap election.

—ARNOLD VAN VUGT,
PO Box 237 ,
Cagayan de Oro City

Rotary dared: Honor honest people

HOW I WISH I COULD GIVE SECURITY guard George Bacod a 21-gun salute ("Hard-up guard returns P500,000," PDI, 12/20/06) for his exemplary deed. How I wish (again) our political leaders were honest like him.

To give fitting honors to honest people like Bacod, I would like to suggest that we put up a black granite wall possibly at the Luneta where the names of honest people like Bacod could be enshrined for everybody to see, so that their good example would be emulated by our people.

Possibly, this project could be spearheaded by the Rotary.

—PAUL R. MORTEL,
MBLA Court, Malanday,
Marikina City 1805

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Food Authority (NFA) in Region V, through its Regional Bids and Awards Committee (RBAC) invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the following projects:

	Project	Location	Brief Description	Approved Budget (Php)	Calendar days for Completion
Lot 1	Repair of Regional Office Bldg.	Pier Site, Legazpi City	Re-roofing/repair/ improvement of 1st flr, 2nd flr & 3rd flr	4,499,628.50	120
Lot 2	Site development of NFA-Legazpi City compound and Rehabilitation of Motorpool/TSD Office	- do -	– Provision of new retaining wall & repair of bldg foundation & scoured compound – Re-roofing/ restoration/improvement	3,895,561.21	120
Lot 3	Restoration/construction of 50,000 cavans cap. whse.	NFA Compound, Tabaco City	Dismantling of existing wooden abacorp whse and const of whse made of concrete wall & floor slab & steel trusses w/ G.I. roofings	8,999,950.75	180

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB license with a minimum Small B category and duly registered with the Government Electronic Procurement System (GEPS) of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). The prospective bidder must submit a largest single contract, the value of which adjusted to current prices using the wholesale consumer price index, and completed within the period of five (5) years, similar to the contract to be bid and must be at least fifty percent (50%) of the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC). Also, the prospective bidder must have key personnel and equipment available for the implementation of the contract. The RBAC will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the eligibility check/screening as well as the preliminary examination of bids The RBAC will conduct post-qualification of the Lowest Calculated Bid.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations-A (IRR-A).

The schedule of RBAC activities are as follows:

	ACTIVITIES	DATE	TIME
1.	Receipt from prospective bidders of Letter of Intent (LOI) & including application for eligibility & to bid	January 29, 2007 to February 05, 2007	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
2.	Issuance of eligibility forms	January 29, 2007 February 05, 2007	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
3.	Deadline for submission of Eligibility Requirements	February 05, 2007	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
4.	Notice of results of Eligibility Check	February 06, 2007	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
5	Issuance of Bid Documents	February 07, 2007 to February 12, 2007	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
6.	Pre-bid Conference	February 13, 2007	10:00 a.m.
7.	Submission of Bid Documents	February 26, 2007	until 9:30 a.m.
8.	Opening of Bids	February 26, 2007	10:00 a.m.

Eligibility forms/requirements may be secured and submitted to the RBAC Secretariat upon submission of Letter of Intent (LOI) and payment of a non-transferable/non-refundable amount of Php 500.00 to the NFA Cashier.

Bidding documents will be issued to eligible bidders only upon payment of a non-transferable/non-refundable amount of Php 5,000.00 per lot to the NFA Cashier.

The venue for the pre-bidding conference, submission and opening of bids shall be at the Conference Room, 2nd Floor, NFA-Regional Office V, Pier Site, Legazpi City.

Any eligible bidder can bid for one, a combination or all of the lots.

Other inquiries may be addressed to the RBAC Secretariat with tel. # (052) 480-7933 / 480-7015 / 480-7085 / 820-0018 and Fax # (052) 480-7900.

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT ONLY SUCH BIDS, OR TO AWARD TO ANY CONTRACTOR WHOSE BID IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA OR TO THE GOVERNMENT

(Sgd.) JOSE B. GUEVARA
RBAC Chairman

(PDI - January 27 & February 2, 2007)

A human rights group championing terrorists

AN ACTIVIST GROUP, WHICH CALLS ITSELF Focus on the Global South, is demanding a probe on the alleged engagement of US troops in the hunt for the notorious al-Qaida-linked terrorists and Abu Sayyaf bandits in Sulu.

We, of course, know that elite US special forces have been training our Filipino soldiers in the art of new combat against pesky terrorist elements. This is done right inside the battle arenas where the real threats exist. What and where could be a better training ground than Sulu?

The activist group appears to be more concerned with the plight of the terrorists. But it should not expect our troops to experience combat vicariously like what they would get from classroom tutorials. Our troops are fighting a vicious group that masters the most hostile battle terrains. It is just appropriate that they should be trained under conditions that would better equip them with skills, vim and vigor to do battle even in the enemy's territory.

Wherever they are, members of the US forces will always be stalked not only by al-Qaida but also by its clones. It is foolhardy to think that these extremists will not strike at their targets when they have the opportunity. It is also foolish to hope that an American soldier in training or doing a humanitarian job will not strike back if threatened by enemy fire. But we have not yet heard of this happening in Sulu. Moreover, if it will happen at all, we cannot fault an American soldier for fighting back. When one is confronted with a hostile fire he cannot play martyr and allow the enemy to display his corpse as a victory trophy. Either one faces this reality or he is out of his wits to believe that a committed terrorist will not consign him to kingdom come.

Either FGS is a legal activist front of the al-Qaida and the Abu Sayyaf or it is plainly ignorant of how these groups operate. It is not, therefore, surprising to see and hear militants parading as human rights activists while opposing the Balikatan exercises and the proposed anti-terror bill. Activists who speak for and demonstrate in the streets to champion the rights of terrorists ought to be listed under the same category as the "enemy of the state."

—EDGAR PALMA,
edpalma1960@yahoo.com

INQUIRER Visayas

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Website: www.inquirer.net/regions

Editor **Jun Bandayrel**
Bureau Chief **Edralyn L. Benedicto**

Two grandmas lead way for environment

By Ma. Diosa Labiste
Iloilo City

TWO GRANDMOTHERS HAVE MADE ILOILO sit, literally, and listen to conversations on how to care for the environment.

Aurora Alerta-Lim and Lucy de la Fuente are the main hosts of EcoForum, a cable television talk show aired every Thursday, at 6-7 p.m., over the Central Philippine University (CPU) Alumni Channel. Another host is Jeriel Militar, an engineer teaching at the CPU.

The talk show, watched even outside the Philippines through the CPU webcast, is the only one of its kind. It has been running in the last 18 months, short enough to not grab local ratings but long enough to be regarded as the community's conscience.

Lim and De la Fuente said they started the environment-oriented show because they refused the excuse of politicians and business people that Nature should be sacrificed for progress.

The show was also an offshoot of their environmental activism against the proposal to build coal-fired power plants in Iloilo, the neglect of critical watersheds and air pollution in Iloilo City. They found their voice and, now, a growing audience who share their mission to make communities safe, healthy and green.

A long way

The program has come a long way from being a voice in the wilderness since it was launched in June 2005 by the CPU Environmental Concerns Office. Today, environment watch groups, farmers, physicians, professors and students want to be guests or to be interviewed in the show.

Lim said that, sometimes, she and her co-host had to turn down requests for guesting. But if an issue begs immediate attention, like the oil spill in Guimaras, they would always find a way to discuss it.

A week after the Aug. 11 spill caused by the sinking of the MT Solar I carrying bunker fuel of Petron, EcoForum asked Melvin Purzuelo of Green Forum Western Visayas to talk about it. In succeeding months, the show spent two out of four monthly episodes on oil spill updates.

The show also discussed wildlife conservation, Christian ecology, renewable energy, alternative medicine, HIV/AIDS, genetic engineering, reproductive health, fitness and lifestyle, media and environment, organic farming, geological hazards and birthing methods.

In October last year, it had Dr. Kent Edward Carpenter, an American ichthyologist, marine biologist and marine conservationist, who said the Verde Island Passage between Batangas and Mindoro harbored the greatest concentration of marine species, making it the center of biodiversity in the whole world.

No guest shortage

"We tackled various topics because there is no shortage of experts and guests," said Lim, the producer. "They also like our format which is conversational and puts the guests at ease."

LUCY de la Fuente and Aurora Lim host the environment talk show "EcoForum" on a cable television channel in Iloilo City.

ARNOLD ALMACEN

Lim and De la Fuente said they had no experience in hosting a cable TV talk show. It took them three episodes before they became comfortable in front of the camera, which was then handled by students who consider the show their laboratory.

"We focused more on the meat of the issues and make do with limited studio equipment. Sometimes, the camera hanged or the lights were defective, but the show went on," said De la Fuente.

As hosts, they are not neutral, Lim said. "We are advocates for the environment and we are passionate about it. We like viewers to take us seriously because we have something to tell them."

The hosts avoid inviting politicians because they don't want to be associated with any political groups. They want it to remain a talk show of experts, environmental advocates and nongovernment organizations, that give intelligent discussions to environment issues.

Background

A grandmother of two girls, Lim, 63, is the special assistant on environmental concerns to CPU President Juanito Acanto. She is a registered chemical engineer. She finished her Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering, cum laude, at the CPU and earned her Master of Arts in Mathematics at the Cebu State University.

She received a study grant on chemical and environmental engineering at the Michigan Technological University in Houghton, Michigan, and a postgraduate diploma in environmental science and technology in Delft, Netherlands. The diploma was accredited by the Commission on Higher Education as Master of Science in Environmental Science and Technology.

She teaches environmental management and has held various positions in the university. She still finds time to be active with the Responsible Ilonggos for Sustainable Energy (Rise), an environment watch group that protests plans to build coal-fired power plants.

She is married to Jesus Lim and they have two children, all engineers.

Retired teacher

De La Fuente, 75, is retired, but she is "still in the thick of things." She is a teacher, radio journalist, human rights advocate and speaker on various subjects.

She spent 25 years as a faculty adviser of English majors and campus journalists at the CPU. As a dramatics and speech teacher, she organized the Teatro CPU and holds a theater festival every year. She is said to be a seasoned interviewer of the Miss CPU beauty pageant and, later, the Mr. CPU for 16 years.

She earned her Bachelor of Theology in 1966, cum laude, at the CPU and of Arts in English, also at the CPU.

De la Fuente sat as a board trustee of the Filamer Christian College in Capiz from 1977 to 1984 and as a member and officer of various Baptists' committees and organizations.

In July last year, the Jaro Cultural and Heritage Tourism Foundation recognized her and her husband, Johnny de la Fuente, as "Outstanding Family Couple." They have six children, nine grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Holistic view

Lim and De la Fuente's view on environment is holistic, not just the biophysical world. Thus, the talk show discusses family planning, HIV/AIDS and healthy lifestyle. They also work with groups like the green bikers, recycling clubs and mountaineers, composed mostly of young people.

"We are now on the twilight years and hope is with the young people. There's hope if we work together," said De la Fuente.

Lim said nothing would slow them down. "We think less of ourselves and more of others like our family and country, after God. In fact, I forget that I am not young anymore until my arthritis hurts."

GONE TOO SOON

We, the members of Batch 90 of Saint Jude Catholic School, would like to extend our most heartfelt condolences to the family of Lester Mancilla, who joined our creator last 21 January 2007. His life was a gift from God and equally as precious as each of our lives.

Lester has left a big gaping hole in the hearts of his family & his friends, and an even greater impact on the business community. A young vibrant man at only 34 years, Lester showed big promise and potential as he was just gearing up and flexing his muscles and could very well be a big asset and contribute much to this society, to this country. Unfortunately, his life was cut short so soon, and this is indeed a big blow and a big big loss to his family, his friends, to this society.

Lester, as we walk with you today on your final trip, we will miss you terribly. We pray that you rest in peace, our schoolmate, our batchmate, our beloved friend.

We believe that in time, justice will be served in the eyes of man, and in the eyes of God.

Farewell, Lester.

ADVT

A14 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER SATURDAY, JANUARY 27, 2007

NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU
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Envoy says US winning hearts in Sulu

MAIMBUNG, SULU—A RANKING US GOVERNMENT official said military exercises between the US and Philippine governments were aimed at wooing the people of this Muslim-dominated province to the cause of peace and good relations with the United States.

Karen Hughes, US state undersecretary for public diplomacy and public affairs, said the exercises, including the scheduled Balikatan 2007, were all about strengthening partnerships and relationships with the people of Sulu.

Hughes is the highest ranking Washington official to have visited Sulu.

During her visit here on Thursday, Hughes, a former television news reporter, said the US government aims to build better relationship with the locals.

Tausugs are traditionally not so keen about Americans because of the Bud Daho massacre in the 1900s, where hundreds of their relatives were killed by American forces.

"We are very committed to helping the people, in partnering with the local government, the local communities to achieve better lives, especially in education, health and economic development, because prosperous communities are more peaceful communities," Hughes told reporters here.

She said with the development efforts the US is also helping train the Philippine military, who are tracking down "terrorists who are threatening the people of the Philippines."

But she quickly added that US troops here are just advising and assisting Filipino troops.

"Our troops are not engaged in any combat operation," she said.

US Ambassador Kristie Kenney said US troops would only be providing training particularly on the evacuation of wounded people or soldiers during the next Balikatan.

She said aside from training Filipino soldiers, US forces here would also be heavily involved in more development works.

"The real focus this year is people to people, mostly humanitarian, because there are great people down here. They are friendly, talented, and very creative and we are looking for ways to help them realize that," Kenney said.

As to the efforts of the military against the Abu Sayyaf and their allies from the Jemaah Islamiyah, Kenney said the US has fully recognized these.

"They are doing a fabulous job. (Many Filipino) soldiers lost their lives and (the Philippine military) is executing extra ordinary missions. I think they are wonderful," Kenney said.

But elsewhere in Mindanao, the violence continues.

US SOLDIERS won't take any chances in Jolo during the visit of State Undersecretary Karen Hughes and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney to US-funded projects in the province.

JULIE ALIPALA/INQUIRER MINDANAO

In Sultan Kudarat, Shariff Kabunsuan, a newly created province, a ranking Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) leader was wounded in an ambush by two motorcycle-riding gunmen.

Police said Adan Abdullah had just left the MILF's district office in Crossing Simuay, where he attended a conference with other Moro officials, when the ambush took place.

He was heading for the city aboard his car when attacked by the gunmen.

The MILF said Adan, a senior rebel official, was rushed to the Cotabato Emergency Hospital here, but was immediately taken out by his relatives.

Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said although Adan was wounded, he has survived the attack.

Adan, also known as Musanip, is a resident of Sultan sa Barongis, Maguindanao and is a close aide of MILF chair Murad Ebrahim.

A source from the military said the perpetrators might have been members of a radical MILF faction.

The source, who requested anonymity, said Adan was among the moderate MILF leaders.

"He (Adan) has been in the forefront of containing rouge, abusive rebel commanders in his turf. It could be possible that these abusive commanders were behind the attempt against his life," the source, an Army intelligence officer, said. *Julie Alipala with a report from Edwin Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao*

Defensor starts courting votes in Marcos country

By Cristina Arzadon
Inquirer Northern Luzon

LAOAG CITY—PRESIDENTIAL CHIEF OF staff Michael Defensor, a former leftist activist, said he welcomes the possibility of the entry of the children of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos in a unity ticket under the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Defensor said reconciling with Edsa 1, 2 and 3 forces is one of the Arroyo administration's 10-point agenda after she won in the 2004 presidential elections.

He started espousing a unity slate for the administration after declaring his intention to run for senator this year, a move that observers noted would strengthen his bid.

"I see no problem with accommodating the Marcos children in the unity ticket. I know that [the Marcos children] are open about this," Defensor said during his visit here on Thursday.

He said he also welcomed the idea of negotiating with the Marcos family to put a closure to the decades-old issue of the family's ill-gotten wealth.

"I was 15 years old when [the Marcos wealth issue started]; I am already 37 with four children. I hope this will be over before I will have my grandchildren," he said.

"I've always taken the stand that it's about time that we settle the Marcos wealth issue [through a compromise agreement] and not pursue the cases so the money can trickle down to the Filipinos," he said.

Defensor on Thursday attended the fiesta celebration of Solsona town. He also stopped in nearby San Nicolas town to make up for his absence last month as fiesta guest.

Defensor, a close friend of Laoag Mayor Michael Fariñas, was the earliest bird in the so-called Marcos country to court the Ilocano vote.

Defensor, however, said no meeting has been formally set with the Marcoses to discuss the possible political alliances in May.

The Marcos siblings were not available for comment on Thursday as they were out of the province.

Defensor said it was former First Lady Imelda Marcos who advised him to "follow the path of reconciliation" when they met in one occasion.

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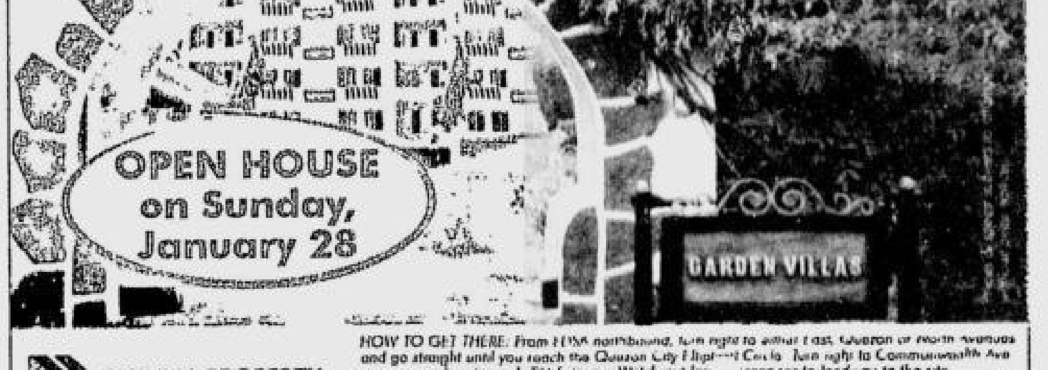

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DAR, group blame each other for deadly clash

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—AGRARIAN REform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman yesterday blamed the Task Force Mapalad (TFM) for the violence that erupted in Hacienda Velez-Malaga, resulting in the death of a farmer-beneficiary and injuries to four others.

"I am pointing to Task Force Mapalad for instigating this trouble. It is Task Force Mapalad that risked the lives of the farmer-beneficiaries," Pangandaman said in a telephone interview. He also said he was saddened by the death of one farmer.

The TFM, on the other hand, blamed Pangandaman for the violence that resulted in the death of Pepito Santillan Thursday morning.

"We blame Pangandaman for this. His weakness, indecisiveness and failure to fulfill his promise to install Cloa (Certificate of Land Ownership Award) holders led to this incident," TFM spokesperson Edna Sobrecanay said.

But Pangandaman said there are ongoing negotiations being conducted by his office between the landowner Bob Cuenca and TFM lawyer Christian Monsod.

However, he noted that the farmer-beneficiaries occupied a portion of the hacienda on Wednesday without the presence of the Department of Agrarian Reform and the other stakeholders.

To avoid bloodshed, Pangandaman said he would need time to talk with the parties involved to ensure the peaceful installation of beneficiaries.

Landowner Bob Cuenca is not against the implementation of agrarian reform but he opposed the awarding of lots to those who were not actual tillers of the land, Pangandaman said.

The identification by DAR of the rightful beneficiaries has yet to be completed when the TFM members occupied some portions of the hacienda, he said.

Pangandaman said the police investigation is still ongoing to determine the identity of the people behind the deadly clash.

"The TFM leaders cannot, however, escape responsibility over this sad development. If only its leaders abided by our earlier agreement not to force the issue, this would not have happened," Pangandaman said.

The DAR chief had said that the TFM acted in "bad faith" when it reneged on a standing dispute over the controversial sugarcane plantation in La Castellana town.

"I wanted us to be transparent on the whole process," he said.

Pangandaman also denied TFM's allegations that he is not acting on the petition to install the farmer-beneficiaries on the disputed property.

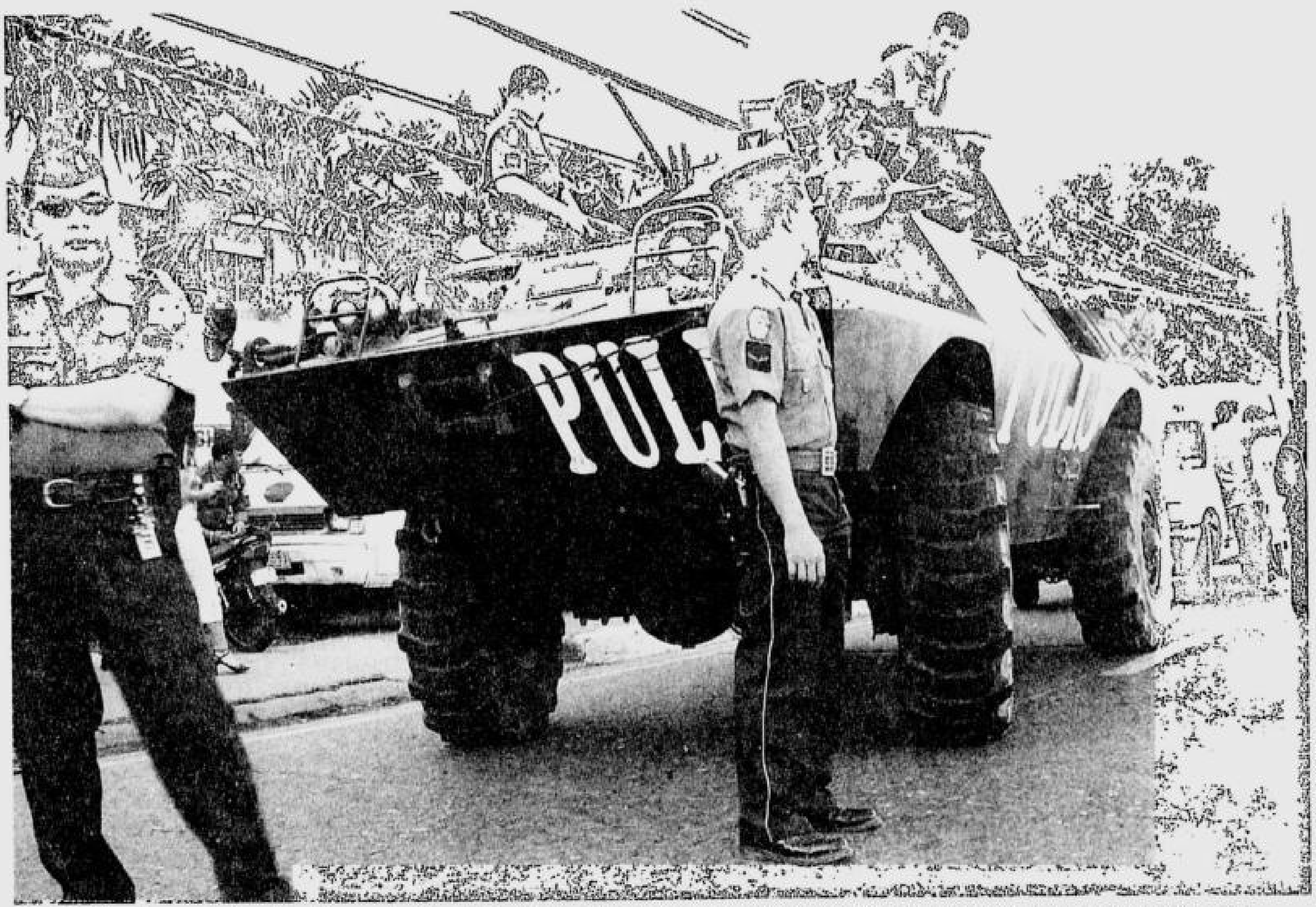
Pangandaman said he has asked the DAR regional director and the PNP to investigate the matter.

Senior Supt. Rosendo Franco, Negros Occidental police director, said he had placed a police outpost at the farm to keep the peace.

The TFM and another group that staked their claim on the Cuenca property clashed and guns were fired.

The government has met tough resistance from some landowners who refuse to turn over their estates, mostly sugar plantations, over for land reform coverage.

Critics of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, that was started under the administration of former President Corazon Aquino, said that the program was doomed from the start.



A POLICE tank was deployed to the provincial capitol of Iloilo at the height of a police assault to enforce a suspension order on Gov. Niel Tupas.

ARNOLD ALMACEN/INQUIRER VISAYAS

Evidence enough on cops' excesses, says Drilon

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—SEN. FRANKLIN Drilon, chair of the Senate committee on public order and illegal drugs, said the committee has enough evidence to show excesses in the police assault on the Iloilo provincial capitol.

Drilon, who visited the provincial capitol here yesterday, said the Senate committee hearing held Thursday has secured the necessary testimony and data, despite the absence of key officials, including Ombudsman Mercedes Gutierrez and Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

Drilon, a close ally of Iloilo Gov. Niel Tupas Sr., said they would include in their report a statement that the assault team "used excessive force" in trying to implement the dismissal order of the Ombudsman against Tupas.

"I think that (excessive force) has already been established even before the hearing," said Drilon.

The report would also point out that the capitol siege "was in gross violation of the rules of engagement which was crafted by no less than General Dulay himself."

Chief Supt. Wilfredo Dulay Sr., Western Visayas police director, was the ground commander of the 265 policemen, including 65 members of the Regional Mobile Group, that assaulted the capitol on Jan. 17.

Drilon said the "rules of engagement expressly provide that there should be maximum tolerance and that the long firearms should be used only in extremely justifiable circumstance."

"In the siege there is certainly no justification for it," Drilon said.

Drilon said that the order to dismiss Tupas and other local elective officials has no legal basis.

"The Ombudsman has no jurisdiction and power to dismiss local elective officials because that is reserved, under Section 60 of the Local Government Code, to the courts," Drilon said.

The committee would also submit recommendations to prevent the occurrence of a similar incident.

Drilon refused to say if this would include the filing of charges against those involved, saying this might preempt their report.

The committee finding is contrary to the report of the police fact-finding committee that absolved all those involved in the operation.

The fact-finding committee, led by Dir. Edgardo Doromal, director of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, even recommended that all the policemen who took part in the operation be commended for a successful operation.

Senator says ₱15B lost in rice wastes

SEN. EDGARDO ANGARA YESTERday said the country's farmers lose as much as P15.2 billion in rice wastes due to the lack of post-harvest facilities.

In a statement, the senator said the total amount of losses in palay production is about 15 percent of the country's rice harvest, which is equivalent to about P15 billion.

"These losses are far more than the P7.65 billion we spent for rice importation," he said.

Angara added that the recorded losses in corn production reached 12.7 percent, or P2.15 billion, which is also more than the country's corn imports worth P1.46 billion.

"Food is more expensive to produce here than in many parts of Southeast Asia," he said.

"Philippine agriculture is handicapped by the lack of basic facilities ...," he said in a statement.

Angara, speaking at the inauguration of the Modern Rice Processing and Milling Complex in Baler, Aurora, said if these losses were removed, the country's dependence on imported grains would be "dramatically reduced."

The Rice Processing Complex in Aurora will contribute to raising farmers' income by reducing post-harvest losses and producing high-quality milled rice.

The complex is equipped with efficient and affordable drying, milling and processing facilities.

UP students say 300 percent hike in tuition start of more increases

LOS BAÑOS, LAGUNA—SAYING that the 300-percent tuition increase in the University of the Philippines would be a "forerunner" for other state-run universities and colleges, the youth party-list group Kabataan Party demanded a recall of the UP Board of Regents' decision to increase tuition.

The youth group, together with other student organizations in UP Los Baños led by the student alliance, Samahan ng Kabataan Para sa Bayan (Sakbayan) and student council, held a protest action Thursday afternoon.

The students placed a large mock tag price around a wrist of the Oblation with the words, "UP education not for sale" and "Junk TOFI." (Tuition and other fee increases)

Roel Naupal, coordinator of Kabataan-UPLB, said that UP has always been the "experimental ground of the government for various policies in schools."

"In the end, it is the continued state abandonment of education that pushes state universities and colleges (SUCs) to the limit. As other SUCs suffer from the same meager budget, the UP TOFI may lead to a chain reaction of other SUCs in the region," he said.

He added that the problems of SUCs are worsened by the stalled passage of this year's national budget. The group foresees that the 2005 General Appropriations Act for 2005 will just be reenacted.

Naupal said the Arroyo administration's abandonment of education is clear in its Long Term Higher Education Development Plan of 2001-2010 which states, among others, that within the said period, the number of SUCs should have decreased to 20 percent of the current number and that tuition in 70 percent of SUCs should be equivalent to those of private schools.

"With UP students paying tuition equivalent to that of private schools, it loses its classification as a state university, and the concept of UP students as Iskolar ng Bayan is essentially lost," Naupal said.

Kris Romera, chair of Sakbayan, also hit the UP BOR decision that "tuition will be subsequently adjusted annually based on the national inflation rate."

Romera said that the House Committee on Higher and Technical Education (CHTE), has already declared a Commission on Higher Education memorandum allowing tuition increases as illegal in a meeting last June 2006. *Niña Catherine Calleja, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

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JPB USC-TABAK-SCMP-ΣKΓ ΣΔΠ-ANAKBA

STUDENTS of the University of the Philippines Baguio on Tuesday set out with the first of many strikes they have scheduled to protest the 300 percent tuition hike imposed by the UP Board of Regents before 2006 closed.

VINCENT CABREZA/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

ROUNDUP

Police nab alleged gunrunner

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—Members of the police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) arrested a suspected gunrunner in a raid at the suspect's house in Dasmariñas, Cavite on Thursday noon. Senior Supt. Mark Edison Belarma, CIDG-Calabarzon director, said they searched the house of Justo "Ka Osting" Lopez, 59, and resident of Barangay Batuhan, Dasmariñas, at around 12:30 p.m. after an informant told them that he has been selling guns to criminals. Recovered from the suspect were a .45-caliber pistol, an M-16 Armalite rifle and a cache of live ammunition. Belarma said a case of illegal possession of firearms will be filed against Lopez who is now jailed in Camp Crame.

Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Rebels burn equipment

COTABATO CITY—Communist rebels burned heavy equipment owned by a private company engaged in oil palm processing in Columbio, Sultan Kudarat on Tuesday, police authorities said yesterday. Sultan Kudarat police chief Supt. Teng Mamalinta Tucao said New People's Army (NPA) rebels, led by a Commander Kasamurin, intercepted a bulldozer owned by the company in Barangay Sucob and set it on fire. He said the company, which he did not identify, had allegedly angered the rebels because of the firm's refusal to pay revolutionary tax.

Jeoffrey Maitem, Inquirer Mindanao

BCDA paying Baguio City

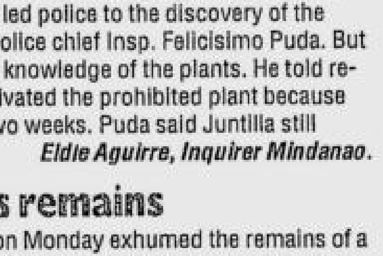
THE BASES Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) has already remitted a total of P50 million in partial fulfillment of its commitment to assist the Baguio City government in the acquisition of the Baguio Convention Center, pursuant to an agreement between BCDA and city hall. BCDA President Narciso Abaya made the statement in reaction to an Inquirer story saying Baguio wanted better terms for Camp John Hay. Abaya, in the statement, said the payments stopped when the Camp John Hay Development Corporation (CJHDevCo), developer of the former US military facility, stopped paying its lease obligation to BCDA in 2003.

Militiaman shoots colleague

DIGOS CITY—A militiaman shot and seriously wounded a comrade inside their detachment in Barangay Savoy in Matanao, Davao del Sur for allegedly courting his wife. Mario Enoc, 39, a resident of Barangay Dongan Pekong, admitted he lost his temper when Emmie Gulayda continued courting his wife despite his appeal. Police said when Gulayda just laughed off his plea, Enoc shot him with a Garand rifle. Gulayda was hit in the neck and was being treated in a government hospital. Enoc yielded to his superiors and was turned over to the police. But Matanao police chief Insp. Elmer Cabuslay said they released the militiaman because no charges have been filed against him. He said Gulayda's family has yet to file a complaint against Enoc.

Eldie Aguirre, Inquirer Mindanao

Bulusan spews ash



SORSOGON CITY—Bulusan Volcano acted up on Wednesday night, spewing ash into at least four barangays in Irosin, Sorsogon. Bella Tubianosa, a volcanologist of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, said the explosion occurred at 10:06 p.m. and the ash drifted northwest. Among the villages where ash fell were Monbon, Tinampo, Mapaso and Cogon.

Up to 3 mm-thick ash fell on the villages. She said Phivolcs instruments had recorded 31 earthquakes from Bulusan. The last explosion happened on Dec. 20 last year.

Bobby Labalan, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Cops uproot marijuana

BANSALAN, Davao del Sur—Police uprooted at least 11 hills of young marijuana plants inside a sugarcane farm in Sitio Bolhoon in Barangay Buenavista here on Monday morning. A tip-off led police to the discovery of the marijuana plants, according to acting police chief Insp. Felicisimo Puda. But the landowner, Sammy Juntilla, denied knowledge of the plants. He told reporters he could not have possibly cultivated the prohibited plant because the sugarcane would be harvested in two weeks. Puda said Juntilla still faces charges.

Eldie Aguirre, Inquirer Mindanao.

Soldiers exhume cop's remains

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—Soldiers on Monday exhumed the remains of a policeman who was allegedly abducted and executed by communist rebels in February 2005. Lt. Col. Gregory Cayetano, chief of the 71st Infantry Battalion, said the third attempt to locate the remains of retired SPO4 Esteban Bravo was successful with the help of two former New People's Army rebels. The remains were found in a shallow grave near the peak of Mt. Baldos in Umingan, Pangasinan.

Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon

Joint venture on halal

DAVAO CITY—The proposed joint venture on the *halal* industry between the Philippines and Brunei has been moving slowly but an official of the Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Inc. (DCCCII) said the Philippines could not be faulted for this. Vicente Lao, DCCCII executive vice president, said the reason for the slow realization of the cooperation was Brunei's business system and procedure. But Lao said he was confident the proposed venture would succeed. Under the proposal, the Philippines would act as franchisee of Brunei's halal certification system as it targets Muslim countries for export of foods processed according to Islamic laws.

Judy Quiros, Inquirer Mindanao

Yoga camp opens

THE BRAHMA Kumaris, a non-government organization, will hold a yoga camp today and tomorrow at the Center for Spiritual Learning, 1020 Magallanes Drive, Tagaytay City. The program that starts 4 p.m. today includes garden meditation, video showings, limbering exercises and yoga experiments. For details, call (046) 413-2128; (02) 890-7960; (02) 922-9231; (02) 521-2015

SPORTS

TITLE CRACK FOR VILORIA

Lab test confirms Niño drug use

A LABORATORY TEST HAS CONFIRMED WBC junior flyweight champion Omar Niño indeed used banned substance in his last defense, thereby leading to the strong possibility Brian Viloria would be made to fight for the vacant world title.

The University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) announced Niño had tested positive of metamphetamines following his rematch with Viloria last Nov. 18 at the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas.

Earlier, Niño was also found positive of the banned substance by the Nevada State Athletic Commission, which handed down a suspension on the Mexican fighter.

The WBC will most likely strip Omar Niño of his title, although WBC president Jose Sulaiman also announced to the press that Niño questioned the validity of the UCLA test as "he did not sign the container nor saw anyone seal it," before the samples were taken to the laboratory.

Niño, according to Sulaiman, has demanded that a DNA test be done to prove that he is not guilty of the charges that he used banned substances before the fight.

With these latest developments, the WBC will likely order Viloria, the No. 1 contender, and No. 2 ranked Edgar Sosa to fight for the title.

Omar Niño had retained the WBC title by eking out a hard-earned draw with Viloria in the Manny Pacquiao-Erik Morales card.

Lawyer Gary Gittelsohn, who manages Viloria, had earlier stated that they would demand that the title be awarded once again to Viloria; although they would also accept it if the WBC would rule that his ward fight the next highest rated contender in the division.

Sosa, 27, hails from Mexico City and parades a record of 26 wins (14 KOs) and 5 losses.

Viloria, on the other hand, boasts 19 wins, 1 loss, 1 draw with 12 KOs. *Salven L. Lagumbay, Contributor*

Red Bull, TNT forge deadlock

GAMES TOMORROW (*Araneta Coliseum*)
4:35 p.m.—Red Bull vs San Miguel
7:20 p.m.—Barangay Ginebra vs Red Bull

By Musong R. Castillo

FROM A SLEEPER TO A thriller.

Mac Cardona buried a triple with 1.1 seconds left last night to lift Talk 'N Text to a 99-96 decision of Barangay Ginebra, and the Philippine Cup semifinal series which many thought was ho-hum when it opened has suddenly taken a totally different complexion.

The Phone Pals forced their will in the game, slowing down the pace every time they had the chance to build leads of as many as 15 points in the third period before executing the game-winning play to perfection.

Cardona's series-equalizing jumper hushed the pro-Ginebra crowd at the Araneta Coliseum, and he also got the chance to do the final chest-thump in his personal rivalry with Mark Caguioa, who burned Talk 'N Text for the second straight game with a night-high 31 points.

The crucial third game is scheduled tomorrow, and the way these two teams slugged it out totally dismissed all indications of what was expected to be a walk-in-the-park of a series for the Gin Kings.

"We came out with a different attitude tonight," Talk 'N Text coach Derrick Pumaren said. "We made them play half-court offense. We wanted them to beat us (playing) that way, unlike in Game 1 when they beat us in transition."

Meanwhile, Red Bull broke away in the fourth period, dismantling San Miguel, 106-84, to also knot its best-of-seven series with the Beermen after two games.

Junthy Valenzuela was at the forefront of a frenzied Red Bull run, nailing baskets from inside and out to total 22 points and help the Barako regain their confidence after a demoralizing 114-109 Game 1 loss.

"We have no doubts that we can beat San Miguel," Red Bull's Yeng Guiao said. "We beat the most talented team in the league and we beat them convincingly."

It was the worst loss by San Miguel in the tournament. The Beermen lost just five games in the elimination round, none of them by more than eight points.

Ginebra rallied mightily after Cardona had given the Phone Pals a 74-59 lead also with a triple with 5:53 left in the third period.

That was the only time when the pace of the game got out of the hands of the Phone Pals, who lost the series-opener, 100-115, after being down by as many as 29 points in the first half.

And hold on the Phone Pals did, as they thwarted every attempt by the Kings to lead before Jimmy Alapag, who had two crucial blunders that allowed the game to be tied at 94, found Cardona wide open on the left flank for the shot of his young career.

"I knew that it was going in the moment I let it go," Cardona later told reporters in Filipino. "I was missing so many shots before that and I thought that it was time that I was rewarded."

The loss not only denied the Kings the chance to take command of the series, it also threw away Jay-Jay Helterbrand's first career triple-double, which was also the first "TD" by a local since Willie Miller (24 points, 10 rebounds, 10 assists) on Feb. 2, 2005.

Helterbrand finished with 15-10-10.

Caguioa, who chalked up the first back-to-back 30-point games by a local since Red Bull's Enrico Villanueva in December 2004, did not get to touch the ball in Ginebra's final play. Rudy Hatfield missed a triple long at the buzzer.

The scores:

First Game

TALK 'N TEXT 99—Cardona 21, Washington 20, Alapag 16, Carey 15, De Ocampo 10, Taulava 9, Ritualo 8, Fran 0, Pablo 0, Belano 0.

BARANGAY GINEBRA 96—Caguioa 31, Reavis 16, Helterbrand 15, Salvacion 11, Hatfield 10, Macapagal 3, Holper 3, Mamaril 3, Abarrientos 3, Tubid 1.

Quarters: 23-29, 54-all, 78-71, 99-96.

Second Game

RED BULL 106—Valenzuela 22, Baguio 12, Najorda 9, Fonacier 9, Cruz 9, Villanueva 9, Pennisi 9, Robinson 7, Sharma 6, Membrere 5, Bugia 5, Alvarez 4.

SAN MIGUEL 84—Gonzales 14, Seigle 13, Tenorio 12, Hontiveros 12, Calaguio 11, Racela 9, Espinas 4, Wilson 4, Tugade 2, Pena 2, Adducul 1, Ildefonso 0.

Quarters 23-15, 40-43, 64-61, 106-84

Late Sports
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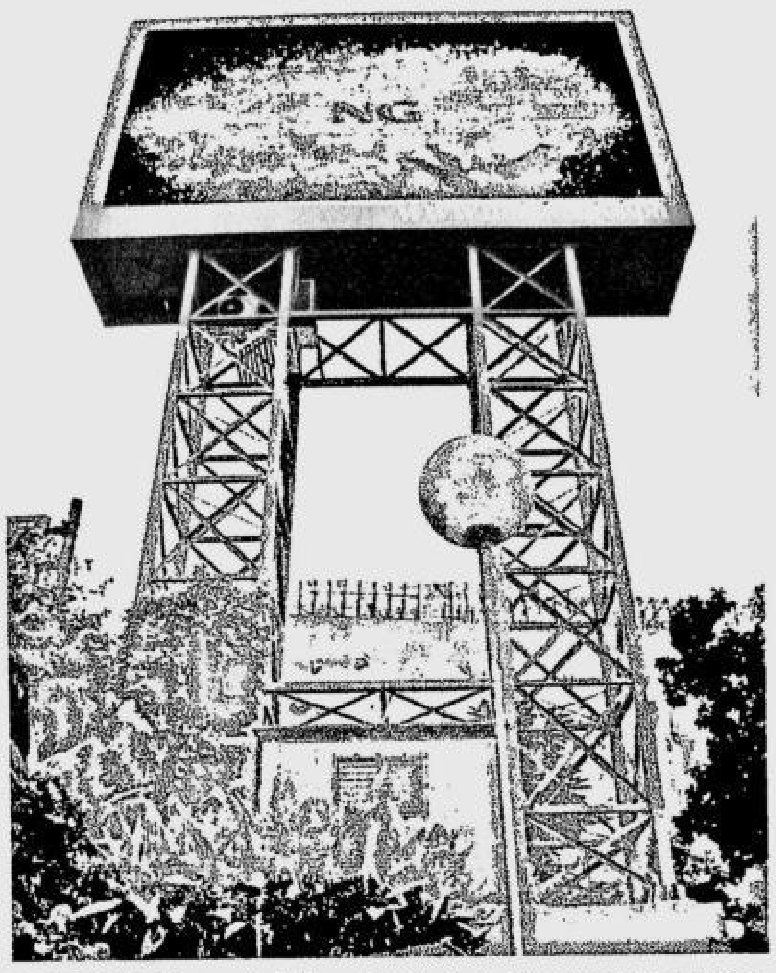
People are talking. Will Basti Artadi finally answer the burning question? Find out on **Page E2**



THIS GIANT electronic billboard at the foot of the Guadalupe Bridge is the object of a brewing feud between Public Works and Makati City officials. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

Court battle looms over ad

Makati officials may face graft raps–DPWH

By Leila B. Salaverria and Tarra Quismundo

A LEGAL BATTLE IS BREWING OVER AN electronic billboard located in a small park at the Guadalupe cloverleaf interchange in Makati City.

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) is planning to challenge a court injunction that stopped the dismantling of the outdoor advertisement.

The DPWH may also file graft charges against Makati City officials who approved the construction of the electronic billboard. Director Emmanuel Cuntapay of the DPWH's National Building Code Development Office said the billboard should not have been allowed to stand based on a Court of Appeals' ruling that public parks are beyond the commerce of man.

On the other hand, Makati information chief Joey Salgado said yesterday that the city government was prepared to face the DPWH in court and defend the city council resolution approving an agreement between City Hall and advertising firm Jemah Ads Inc. for the construction of the electronic display. Cuntapay said the officials who approved the construction could be charged with violation of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

At the same time, Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. said they were appealing to billboard owners inside public parks to voluntarily dismantle their illegal structures "to avoid inconveniences on their part."

Cuntapay said the DPWH would review the council resolution that allowed Jemah Ads Inc. to put up the billboard. As for the preliminary injunction order from a Makati Regional Trial Court, he said the department's legal division was considering challenging the decision. But the DPWH might not go to court if the council would not allow billboards in the park, he added.

The Jemah Ads billboard is in a small park on the southbound lane of Edsa, near the Pasig River. The DPWH was supposed to dismantle it Wednesday, but it decided to give Jemah Ads three days to take down the structure voluntarily. Jemah Ads got an injunction halting the dismantling before the DPWH deadline.

Cuntapay said yesterday Jemah Ads officials did not honor an agreement to remove the structure. He said the issue was not about structural soundness, but its legality.

He said the appellate court ruled in 2000 that public parks, like public streets, should not be the subject of a lease contract.

"They are violating our patrimony," the DPWH executive said. He said if public parks could be used for business, then public streets might also be used for commerce.

Meanwhile, Ebdane ordered department officials to include public parks in the monitoring of illegal and unsafe billboards.

He said billboards inside parks could also pose a threat to the public.

The secretary said since people converge in public parks, it is important that their safety from structures within the vicinity is ensured.

He said DPWH personnel, local building officials and Metro Manila Development Authority personnel would begin checking the structural integrity of billboards and signs in public parks.

Salgado, however, said the main issue was the DPWH's "sudden interest in the electronic billboard in Makati when there are several

COURT/ A18

Pasay City official seeks injunction against his suspension

By Jocelyn R. Uy

FLORENCIO MATEO, SUSPENDED head of the Pasay Traffic and Parking Management Office (PTPMO), has filed a petition for a mandatory injunction against the order barring him for holding office for 90 days.

Mateo is now on the 73rd day of his suspension imposed in November by newly installed Mayor Allan Panaligan.

Mateo filed the petition on Wednesday in the Pasay Regional Trial Court.

It was raffled off to the sala of Judge Jesus Mupas of Branch 117.

In his motion, Mateo asked the court to issue an injunction order, and to reinstate him to his old post.

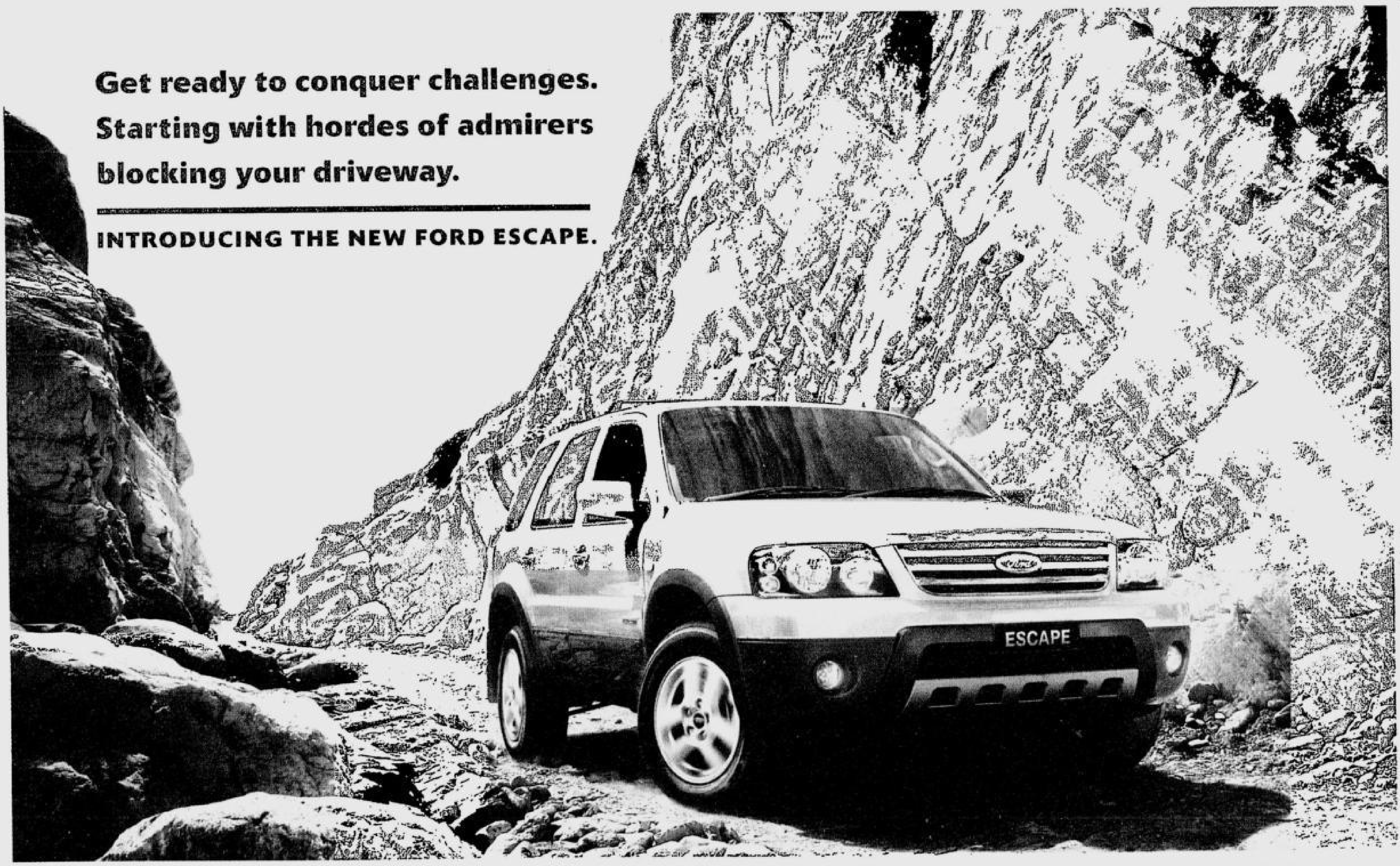
He cited Section 85 of the Local Government Code providing that "local chief executives may preventively suspend for a period not exceeding 60 days any subordinate official or employee under his authority pending investigation if the charge against such official or employee involves dishonesty, oppression or grave misconduct..."

Panaligan, then acting mayor, ordered Mateo's suspension on Nov. 15 following complaints from traffic volunteers and regular staff of the PTPMO alleging the official failed to release their salaries and incentives.

Charges and countercharges were filed in various courts by the camps of Mateo, an ally of dismissed Pasay Mayor Wenceslao "Peewee" Trinidad, and that of Panaligan.

"Assuming that I committed a violation, he should have not suspended me for 90 days," Mateo told the INQUIRER over the phone yesterday.

"Clearly, they intended to bend the rules," he said.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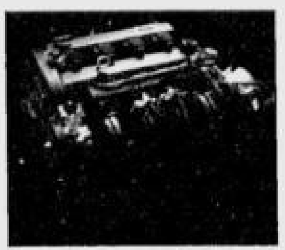

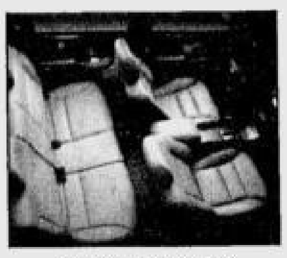

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A pilgrimage to India

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

I WAS FACE TO FACE WITH A guru who looked like Jesus Christ inside a Hindu temple in the middle of a desert in India.

It was my seventh day of a 10-day spiritual journey.

The guru was looking down on me and I was looking up to him. I was kneeling before him.

He told me, through an interpreter, not to blink while we stared at each other for several minutes.

Suddenly, I saw a vision.

I saw a hospital room with men and women in white frantically running.

A group of people outside the hospital room looked worried. Some were crying.

In my vision, I saw what looked like a huge office covered with a black cloud, and several prominent persons crying.

In that same vision, I also had a glimpse of politicians giving the "high five" sign to one another. I saw people rejoicing in the streets.

Just as suddenly, I was staring at the guru again.

The guru is well-known all over India for having water materialize in that desert temple each time he pays a visit.

Like most gurus, he wanders from temple to temple.

Why did I go to that Hindu temple in the middle of a desert in India?

And why did I make that pilgrimage?

I left Manila Jan. 15 for Mumbai (formerly Bombay) to start a 10-day spiritual journey.

I was with a group of eight Filipinos: a psychic who wants to acquire extended "seeing" power; a famous astrologer; two pretty yuppies who want more success in their careers; two wealthy but bored housewives; and a beautiful woman who dreams of becoming a national figure.

I went on that pilgrimage to ask the Hindu gods to erase whatever curse I may have that led to my current predicament.

It was a *kapit sa patalim* (clutching at straws) approach which I'm too embarrassed to admit.

Before I left, I was sorely disappointed with Philippine National Police chief Oscar Calderon who refused to give me a permit to carry my gun.

I had asked Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos to grant me an exemption from the ban prohibiting one from carrying a gun during the election period.

Abalos understands my predicament and promised to give me an exemption.

I wonder if Calderon, allegedly a relative of the President, knows that his predecessor, Arturo Lomibao, even gave me and my brother Erwin a medal for tipping off the police about the existence of a flea market of illegal drugs a few steps from the Pasig City Hall.

Calderon should give me a permit since my life is in danger from the drug syndicate that ran the flea market.

Before taking the trip, I also learned that a warrant of arrest was about to be issued against me for a libel case filed only recently.

Against this background, can you blame me if I resort to drastic—albeit weird, even comical—measures in order to lift what I consider a curse on me?

I went to about 10 Hindu temples and traveled some 10,000 kilometers with my fellow pilgrims and about 20 Japanese from Tokyo and Osaka.

Most of the Japanese pilgrims were second-timers.

Gauging by the stories told by many of them, their wishes were granted by the Hindu gods.

The guru said that whatever I saw or whatever was my desire would come true if I become a complete vegetarian and avoid alcoholic drinks.

I never expected to have that vision.

I hope it doesn't come true.

Row over control of Montalban dump over… for now

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE METROPOLITAN MANILA Development Authority has eased the tension between the Rodriguez municipal government and the Rizal provincial government over the Montalban Solid Waste Disposal Facility.

Earlier, Rodriguez Mayor Pedro Cuerpo bewailed the dismantling of pipes and other equipment for a methane gas testing project in the sanitary landfill.

The facility accepts trash from 10 of the 17 cities and towns of Metro Manila.

Invalid testing

The provincial board, which ordered the leveling of the piles of garbage that damaged the equipment, said the testing was invalid as it was not approved by the provincial government.

Rizal Gov. Casimiro Ynares told the INQUIRER that he had advised Cuerpo to coordinate the project with the provincial board during a meeting Thursday evening with MMDA officials in Mandaluyong City.

"This fight is already embarrassing for our province," Ynares said.

He said that during the dialog, Cuerpo agreed to "follow procedures" and have the methane gas exploration presented to the provincial board.

Ynares also said representatives of foreign investors of the testing project went to his office yesterday afternoon to inquire about requirements for provincial government approval of the project.

Agreement

Cuerpo authorized the testing project after entering into an agreement with private firm Marubeni and Karbon Kredit for the possibility of building a methane gas power plant on the 14-hectare landfill.

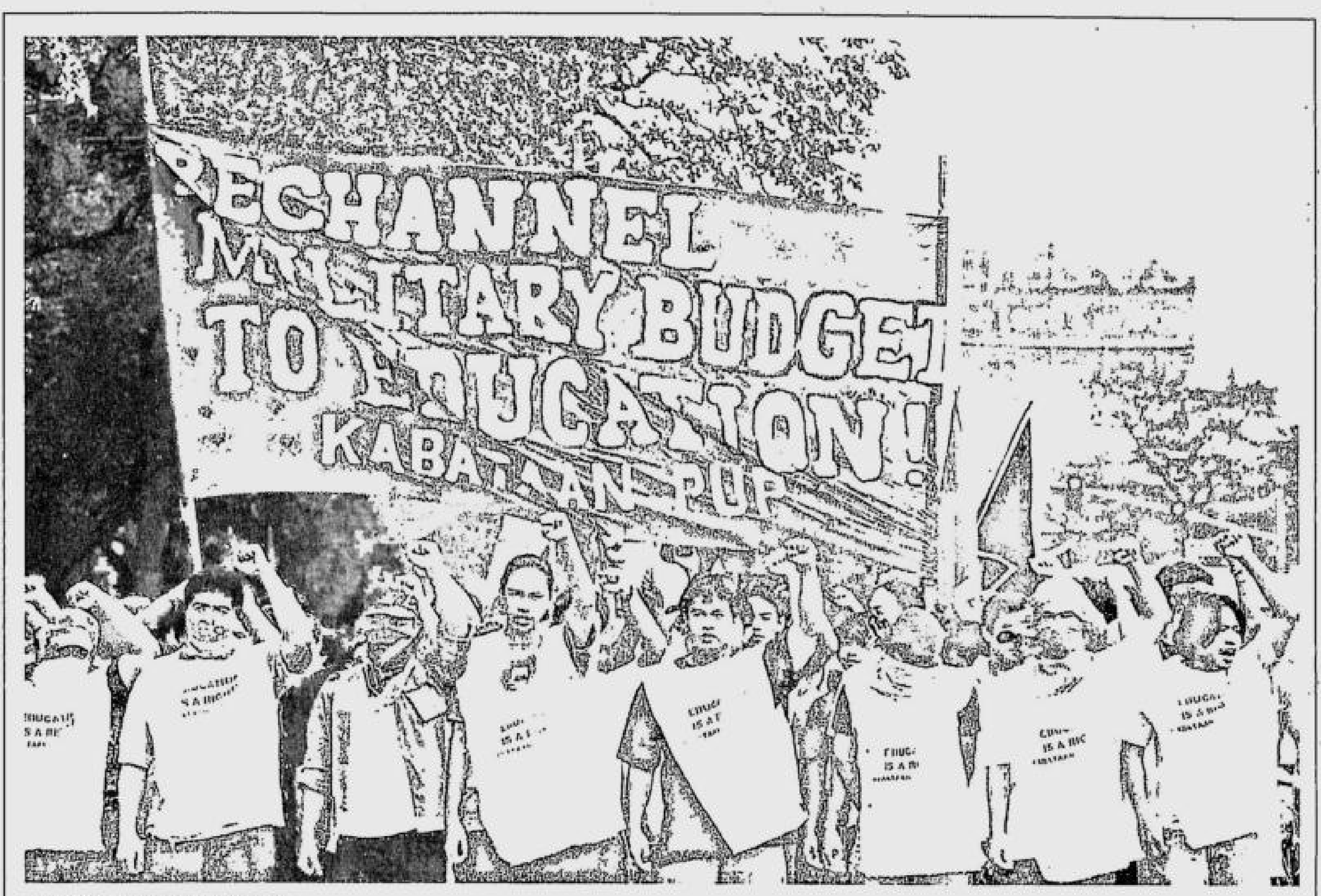
But provincial legal officer Edgardo Samson said only the provincial board was authorized to enter into such agreements.

"We are just asking for some coordination. He should at least show some respect for the provincial government," Samson also said.

Rehabilitation

The provincial board early on Wednesday started to level the landfill as part of an ongoing rehabilitation, damaging the P10-million test pipes and other gadgets.

Cuerpo said yesterday he would have the pipes fixed but only after reaching an agreement with the provincial government.



NO TO TUITION HIKE
College and high school students from different universities and schools in Metro Manila rally near the Malacañang Palace to express their protest against tuition increase and what they said was the government's lack of concern for the youth and education. REM ZAMORA

Court battle looms . . .

From page A17

other larger billboards that pose hazards to the public."

He said DPWH should "be fair and consistent" in its campaign, which was premised on the dangers billboards pose to motorists as shown when Supertyphoon "Milenyo" hit the country in September.

Salgado said there were no complaints against the electronic billboard after Milenyo. "Suddenly, they are shifting the issue to the presence of a billboard on government property."

He said the billboard construction was covered by a 2004 council resolution. The resolution also gave the city 54 minutes' worth of 15-second spots during the billboard's 18 hours of daily operation (6 a.m.-12 midnight) for public service announcements. "The City Council acted within limits of the law and its authority," said Salgado.

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'Minister' nabbed for officiating at fake marriage in City Hall

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE GROOM WORE A FORMAL JACKET, and there was the obligatory pictorial for newlyweds.

But the wedding ceremony turned out to be bogus.

Operatives of the Manila Police District Special Operations Group (SOG) arrested an alleged Protestant minister for performing illegal marriage rites at the Manila City Hall on Tuesday.

Alex Sison, 52, who claims to be a member of Jesus Christ Gospel Aide, Inc. based in Payatas, Quezon City, was nabbed in a room on the fifth floor of the Manila City Hall while accepting marked money from complainant Angela Ocot last Tuesday.

Requirements

An investigation conducted by SPO4 Victorino Batara, deputy chief of the MPD SOG, showed that Ocot, 20, and her Filipino-American fiance Clemente Fernandez, 62, had gone to City Hall last Dec. 28 to inquire about marriage requirements.

A lady guard introduced the couple to the suspect, who said he could perform a wedding ceremony for the two immediately for a P12,000 fee.

When the victims said they only had P4,000 with them, Sison agreed to accept the remaining balance after a week, and immediately produced a formal jacket for the groom.

After performing the rites, the suspect's secretary, a certain Evangeline, took pictures of the "newly married" couple.

Both parties agreed to meet after a week for the couple's complete payment and marriage license.

Investigators said Ocot found out that the suspect had duped them when she ran into a friend who worked at the City Hall shortly after the incident who told her that marriage documents were not processed in such a short period of time.

Ocot then sought police assistance. Sison was later arrested inside Room 552 of the Manila City Hall.

Not that easy

"Not only did the suspect overcharge his victims, quick marriages like the one he performed are not allowed because the couple have to go through the entire process of going to the civil registry, undergoing family planning seminar, obtaining their certificates of no marriage, and posting their marriage bans," Batara said.

The usual marriage fee only ranges from P3,000 to P3,500.

The suspect now faces charges of estafa through swindling in the Manila City Prosecutor's Office, according to Batara.

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METRO-BRIEFS

Gotcha!

EIGHTEEN suspected cell phone snatchers were arrested in various areas in Caloocan City in a renewed effort by local authorities to rid the city of street crimes. Northern Police District director Chief Supt. Pedro Tango said the suspects were nabbed in a series of police operations since Jan. 17. A sharp increase in robbery and holdup incidents prompted the police to intensify their drive against robbers preying on city residents. Among the high risk areas were the Monumento Circle, the streets along the Manila Central University Hospital and near the boundary of Caloocan and Balintawak.

Nancy C. Carvajal

Roxas High homecoming

THE MANUEL A. Roxas High School in Paco, Manila will hold its 59th general alumni homecoming on Sunday at the campus grounds. Theme of the reunion is Roxasian-Reliving the Happy Moments Together. According to Gen. Enrique C. Cuadra, president of the Manuel A. Roxas High School Alumni Foundation, the reunion will start with a thanksgiving Mass at 12 noon. For particulars, please contact: Gen. Enrique Cuadra - 7413220, Marcelina Gerona - 5632403, Milaflor Villegas - 5623648, Santi Cruz - 09173754950.

Uneasy calm in Beirut after intense fighting

BEIRUT—LEBANON TOOK stock Friday after a day of deadly street battles in the capital between government and opposition supporters which killed four people and sparked fears of a plunge back into civil strife.

An uneasy calm prevailed in Beirut at the lifting of an overnight curfew imposed to end the intense fighting between rival Sunni and Shiite Muslims in which around 151 people were also wounded.

The riots, at a level not seen since the end of the 1975-1990 civil war, overshadowed a Paris donors' conference which drew pledges of $7.6 billion in aid for Prime Minister Fuad Siniora's beleaguered government.

A few shops and businesses opened when the overnight curfew ended at 6 a.m. (0400 GMT), but schools and universities remained shut across the nation in line with government orders, AFP correspondents reported.

The roads where the clashes erupted were covered with litter and rubble, while burnt-out cars, buses and large garbage containers lined streets close to Beirut international airport.

During the night, the Lebanese army deployed heavily across the deserted capital, staging patrols and erecting checkpoints on main crossings. The rioting came two days after the Syrian-backed opposition, led by the Shiite fundamentalist party Hezbollah, brought the country to a near-halt through a general strike which was also marred by widespread deadly clashes.

"Rehearsal for civil war in the streets of Beirut," warned the headline of the al-Balad newspaper.

"Damn the one who awakened it," cried the bold headline of the leftist As Safir newspaper in reference to confessional dissension.

Thursday's clashes first broke out on the main campus of Beirut Arab University but fighting soon penetrated mainly Muslim districts of the capital, both Sunni and Shiite.

Youths threw rocks, set fire to tires to block traffic, torched cars and smashed windshields amid the rattle of gunshots as troops fired into the air to try to disperse the crowds. There were reports of gunfire and pictures showed masked men holding guns and assault-rifles.

"Confessional riots start street battles in Beirut, and the specter of discord required a curfew and prompted political action," said the headline of the leading An Nahar newspaper.

It however wondered whether the "discord that took place yesterday, and which threatened to become a scary reality in Beirut, would help ease political deadlocks and defuse the crisis because various Lebanese forces feared to have lost complete control over the explosive events." The riots only ended with calls for calm from leaders of both sides and an army-imposed curfew—the first such action in the country since violent labor demonstrations in 1996.

The danger of further violence erupting prompted Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah to promptly respond with a call for army orders to be obeyed.

As the Damascus-backed opposition accused the government camp of starting the riots, MP Walid Jumblatt of the parliamentary majority said the fighting was triggered by Syrian President "Bashar al-Assad who is trying to burn Beirut." "Curfew in Beirut after it was violated by militias attempting a coup," read the headline of the al-Mustaqbal newspaper, owned by the family of MP Saad Hariri, head of the anti-Syrian parliamentary majority. *AFP*

Russian laughs off threat over poisoning

MOSCOW—RUSSIAN BUSINESSMAN Andrei Lugovoy on Friday laughed off a report that Britain was preparing to demand his extradition to stand trial for the poisoning of former Russian agent Alexander Litvinenko.

Lugovoy, a former KGB bodyguard who later worked as head of security for tycoon Boris Berezovsky, chuckled when a Reuters correspondent read the Guardian report to him.

"You can say on Reuters that when Lugovoy was read the Guardian report about my extradition, Lugovoy gave full-hearted, healthy laughter," he said by telephone.

He declined to answer any other questions and said reporters should refer to earlier interviews. In an interview with Reuters last month, he denied his guilt and lashed out at British media for portraying him as a monster.

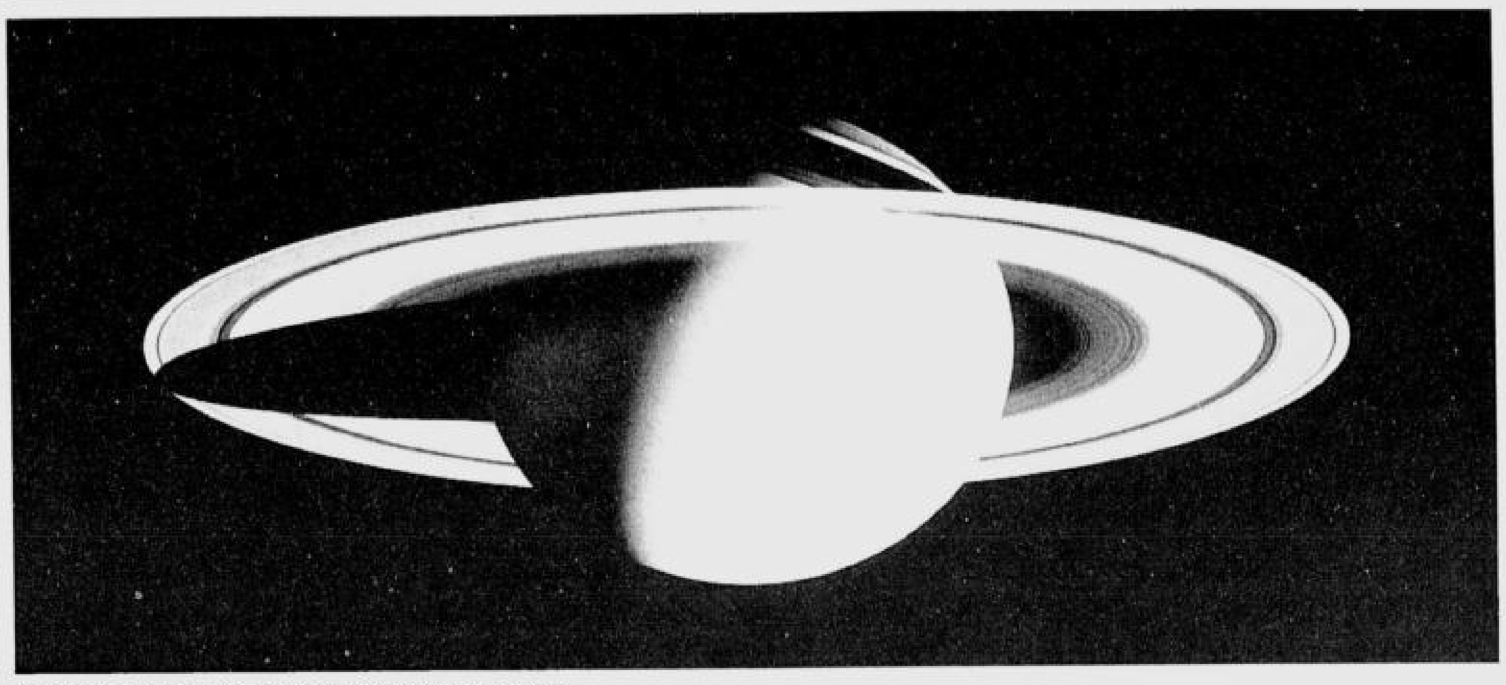
Lugovoy and another businessman met Litvinenko in a London hotel on Nov. 1, the day Litvinenko first fell ill.

Litvinenko, a former spy who became a Kremlin critic, died of polonium 210 poisoning on Nov. 23, three weeks later.

The Guardian quoted unidentified British officials as saying an extradition request for Lugovoy could be made as early as next month. British police had no immediate comment.

Lugovoy was treated at a Moscow hospital after Litvinenko's death for what some Russian media said was radiation sickness. Lugovoy refused to say what he was being treated for.

British detectives questioned him last year at a Moscow hospital that specializes in treating people with radiation sickness. *AP*



MOST DETAILED PICTURE OF SATURN

View of Saturn taken by cameras aboard the Cassini spacecraft released by Nasa, Jan. 24. Cassini captured a series of images in Oct. 2004 that have been composed into the largest, most detailed, global natural view of Saturn and its rings ever made. The mosaic consists of 126 images acquired in a tile-like fashion, covering one end of Saturn's rings to the other and the entire planet in between. AP

US unveils revolutionary heat-beaming weapon

MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, Georgia—The US Defense Department on Wednesday unveiled what it called a revolutionary heat-beaming weapon that could be used to control mobs or repel foes in conflicts like Iraq and Afghanistan.

The so-called Active Denial System causes an intense burning sensation causing people to run for cover, but no lasting harm, officials said.

"This is a breakthrough technology that's going to give our forces a capability they don't now have," Theodore Barna, an assistant deputy undersecretary of defense for advanced systems and concepts, told Reuters. "We expect the services to add it to their tool kit. And that could happen as early as 2010."

The weapon, mounted on a Humvee, uses a large rectangular dish antenna to direct an invisible beam toward a target. It includes a high-voltage power unit and beam-generating equipment and is effective at more than 500 meters.

Existing counterpersonnel systems designed not to kill—including bean bag munitions and rubber bullets—work at little more than "rock-throwing distances," said Marine Col. Kirk Hymes, director of the Pentagon's Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate.

In increasingly complex military operations, the technology provided a much-needed alternative to just going from "shouting to shooting," said Hymes, who is responsible for the weapon's five-year, $60 million advanced development.

Variations of the system could help in peacetime and wartime missions, including crowd control and mob dispersal, checkpoint security and port protection, officials said. It could also help in conflicts like Iraq and Afghanistan.

Raytheon Co., which has worked to develop the technology, has built a prototype called Silent Guardian, that it hopes to sell in the United States and abroad in what could become a multibillion market.

The weapon was shown off publicly for the first time at Moody Air Force Base in Georgia, where it has been undergoing operational tests by the 820th Security Forces Group, which protects Air Force assets. *Reuters*

In Indonesia, highest alert over bird flu

JAKARTA—INDONESIA IS DOING all it can to fight bird flu, the welfare minister said on Friday, a day after officials announced the country's 63rd death from the virus.

Indonesia, which has the world's highest number of human fatalities from bird flu, has been trying to step up efforts to stamp out the disease after a flare up in cases this year following a brief lull.

"Even though our continued effort is giving some significant progress, we are still on highest alert," Welfare Minister Aburizal Bakrie said at a ceremony to receive 100,000 sets of protective equipment donated by the United States.

Bakrie said the government had succeeded in containing human infections of bird flu in nine of the 30 high-risk provinces.

The disease, however, remains endemic in fowl in some of the most densely populated parts of Indonesia, including Java.

After a spike in cases this year, Indonesia moved to ban backyard poultry in the capital and surrounding provinces, but previous culling attempts have faltered because of a lack of funds and difficulty enforcing bans in more remote areas.

Indonesia, the world's fourth-most-populous country that stretches across 17,000 islands, faces an uphill task in fighting the virus. *Reuters*

Mob beats up suspected serial killers

NEW DELHI—TWO SUSPECTED SERIAL child killers were beaten up by a furious mob outside an Indian court on Thursday after being remanded in custody over the horrific murders of 21 people.

Businessman Moninder Singh Pandher was battered unconscious, and his domestic help, Surender Kohli, was roughed up as they were led from the court near the Indian capital in a dramatic brawl shown live on television.

"Some lawyers and some members of the public who were present at the court premises beat up both the men," a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) official said.

"We are investigating how this incident happened. The accused have been taken to hospital for a medical check-up," a CBI spokesperson added.

Pandher's condition was stable, while Kohli had been discharged from the hospital, news reports said.

The pair have been in police custody since their arrest on Dec. 29 over the kidnap, rape and murder of at least 21 people, most of them children, in a New Delhi suburb.

Public feelings have been running high ever since police began discovering human remains in drains around the "House of Horrors" in the wealthy town of Noida where the two men lived.

Lawyers were also reported to have been involved in the attempted lynching, although this was denied.

"We were in the court when they were produced. We raised slogans. What happened was wrong. The lawyers did not beat them," lawyer Ajay Vir Singh told reporters. *AFP*

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1	Balaoan / Bacnotan 1	Abra	2	50,000	17.928	896,400.00
2.	San Fernando / Bacnotan 1	Benguet	6	185,000	21.12	3,907,200.00
3	Bacnotan 2 / San Fernando	Benguet	6	185,000	21.12	3,907,200.00
4	Bacnotan 1 / Bacnotan 2	Ilocos Norte	3	75,000	28.70	2,153,200.00
5	Bacnotan 1 / Bacnotan 2	Ilocos Sur	5	140,000	15,612	2,186,110.00
6	San Fernando / Aringay	West Pangasinan	8	224,000	14,983	3,356,550.00
7	Aringay / San Juan	West Pangasinan	8	246,000	11,906	2,929,180.00
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* Exclusive of VAT

All truck units must be registered as "Trucks for Hire" (TH) with the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB). The prospective bidder may bid in any or all preferred destinations upon payment of a non-refundable application fee as follows:

2 – 6 units	-	P 5,000.00
7 – 10 units	-	8,000.00
11 - 20		10,000.00
More than 20 units	-	15,000.00

The Issuance of bid documents, pre-bidding conference and bidding proper shall be conducted at NFA-Regional Office I Conference Room, San Juan, La Union on the following schedules:

ACTIVITIES	TIME	DATE
1. Issuance of Bidding Documents	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Jan. 29 – Feb. 5, 2007
2. Pre-Bidding Conference	10:00 a.m.	February 6, 2007
3. Deadline of Submission of Eligibility Requirements/Bidding Proper	10:00 a.m.	February 16, 2007

Eligibility criteria includes, among others that the value of the prospective bidder's single largest contract for the last two (2) years, adjusted to current prices, completed within the period and similar to the contract to be bid, must be at least fifty percent (50%) of the Approved Budget for the Contract to be bid.

Prospective bidders must be registered with NFA or may apply for registration until February 5, 2007 at the Licensing Section of the NFA provincial offices where their businesses are situated.

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ACCEPT OR REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS OR TO AWARD TO ANY CONTRACTOR WHOSE BID IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA AND/OR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

(Sgd.) RUBEN S. RIMANDO, CESO VI
Assistant Regional Director and RBAC Chairman

(PDI January 27 2007)

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E-mail: member_relations@sss.gov.ph • Web site http://www.sss.gov.ph

NOTICE

Please get in touch with the Members Assistance Center, Social Security System (SSS), East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City or at any SSS office nearest your place of residence and file your death benefit claim within 90 days upon publication. if you are:

	NAME OF BENEFICIARIES	LAST KNOWN ADDRESS	NAME OF SSS MEMBER	DATE OF DEMISE
1)	Lorna Ong	75 Old Panaderos, Sta. Ana, Manila	Manuel I. Any SS#03-4265156-0	November 7, 2004
2)	Estrella Karaan	Kabog-kabog, Balanga, Bataan	Vivencio Austria SS#03-1200542-1	October 19, 2006
3)	Mila Tabogara	1224 A. Santos Ext., Tondo	Pablo Babon SS#03-0811630-8	November 27, 2006
4)	Editha Banal	1457 Mascardo St., Mkti, Rizal	Pacifico Banal SS#03-1934943-6	May 31, 2002
5)	Juliana Bedolido Alfonso Bedolido Florecita Silvino & Children	Unknown Unknown	Silvino Bedolido SS#08-0007300-4	February 21, 2001
6)	Basilia B. Cabido	Buyot, Don Carlos, Bukidnon	Rolando Serano Cabido SS#06-0271517-5	December 3, 2004
7)	Josephen Casiple Necpura Casiple	Cebu	Romeo V. Casiple SS#06-0111790-7	May 15, 2004
8)	Necias, Ernesto & Mardel Clemena	Dadiangas, Gen. Santos City	Gumersindo Clemena SS#09-0036167-4	July 7, 2005
9)	Ester P. Codilla	54 Mabini St., Ormoc City	Lorenzo Codilla SS#06-0046158-6	December 2, 2006
10)	Marilyn Critica Maverick Critica	Loma de Gato, Marilao, Bulacan	Ramiro Delos Reyes SS#33-2388167-3	August 31, 2003
11)	Magdalena Dominguez	Unknown	Manuel Dominguez SS#03-2170263-4	October 27, 2006
12)	Ramon Dy	Unknown	Marciana P. Dy SS#03-3778191-1	May 13, 2005
13)	Rosa Asuella Gumba	Unknown	Juan M. Gumba SS#05-0061786-7	November 11, 2006
14)	Anastacia Vertudes	San Antonio, San Pedro, Laguna	Danilo Guerrero Lingal SS#04-0157349-5	April 10, 2006
15)	Emily Lumawag Reynaldo Lumawag	Hacienda Maya, Brgy. Sicaba, Cadiz City, Negros Occidental	Dominador Lumawag, Sr. SS#07-0419577-4	August 10, 2005
16)	Delia Duclayan	Unknown	Leonardo D. Magal SS#03-1255540-5	February 21, 2006
17)	Lilia Roque, Irene & Maria Aileen Manaysay	Sima Trinidad, Malolos, Bulacan	Genaro D. Manaysay SS#03-2318727-3	September 16, 2006
18)	Maria Marba	170 BF Roxas St., 7th Ave., Cal City	Peteriano Marba SS#03-2855605-8	May 6, 2005
19)	Lourdes Velasquez	Unknown	Manuel D. Mendoza SS#03-1825331-6	March 19, 2006
20)	Violeta J. Mendoza	Unknown	Vegie A. Mendoza SS#03-3642827-5	December 2, 2005
21)	Soly R. Padillo	Tin-ao, Cagayan de Oro City	Pedro A. Padillo SS#08-0207576-7	October 23, 2006
22)	Elizabeth Bacani	Unknown	Carlito C. Romero SS#02-3029126-5	August 23, 2006
23)	Mercedes Acigada	Unknown	Dionisio Sarmiento SS#03-1313779-6	Missing
24)	Rosita Villanueva	94-A Salud St., Pasay City	Anecito Loreto Secretaria SS#03-2435451-3	October 10, 2006
25)	Margarita Sunga	Davao City	Jesus Sunga SS#09-0051599-6	December 20, 1995
26)	Merlinda Tomabiene	Unknown	Virginia Tomabiene SS#07-0558291-7	November 17, 2004
27)	Maria Abela Valdez	69 Orozco St., Quiapo, Manila	Edwin Binga-an Valdez SS#03-4484621-8	November 5, 2004
28)	Romeo Sona, Jr.	Palnab Virac, Catanduanes	Romeo S. Zafe SS#03-1358074-1	February 25, 2006
29)	Francos C. Zacarias	Murphy, Cubao, Quezon City	Benigno T. Zacarias SS#03-1620052-3	May 28, 2005

(PDI January 27 2007)

– Nothing Follows –

Bush authorizes killing Iranians in Iraq

WASHINGTON—US PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH has authorized the US military to kill or capture Iranian agents active inside Iraq, The Washington Post reported on Friday, citing government and counterterrorism officials with direct knowledge of the plan.

The move, approved last fall, is aimed at weakening Iran's influence in the region and forcing Tehran to abandon its nuclear program that the West believes is for nuclear weapons and not energy, the newspaper said, citing the unidentified officials.

For more than a year, US forces have held dozens of Iranians for a few days, taking DNA samples from some as well as photographs and fingerprints from all those captured, the report said.

Several Iranian officials have been detained in three US raids over the last month. Outgoing US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad told reporters on Wednesday that details of accusations against them would be made public in the coming days.

He said they were "going after networks" of security agents, which he said were a mainstay of Iran's involvement in Iraq. The United States has accused Iran of helping arm, train and fund Iraqi militants, notably fellow Shiite Muslims.

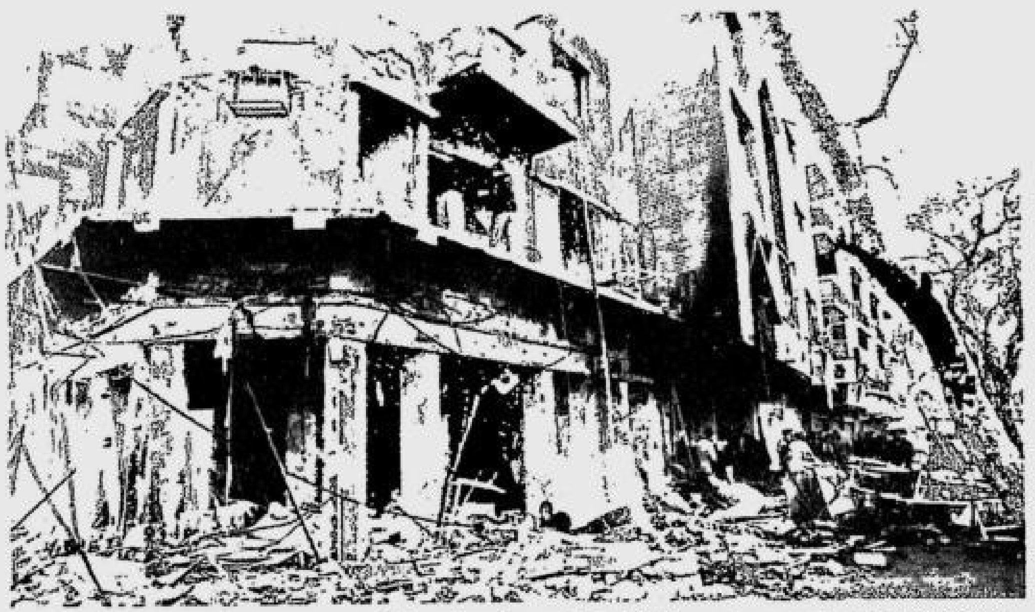
Iran has long been at odds with the United States, pushing ahead with plans to enrich uranium as part of what Tehran calls a peaceful energy program. The West has feared that Iran instead has been trying to develop nuclear weapons.

The new policy applies to Iranian intelligence operatives and members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard thought to be working with Iraqi militias, but not civilians or diplomats, the newspaper said.

No deadly force was known to have been used by US troops against any Iranians, but administration officials have been pushing military commanders to exercise that authority, it said.

The newspaper said there were skeptics in the intelligence community, State Department and Pentagon, including CIA Director Michael Hayden who said Iranians may try to kidnap or kill US personnel in Iraq as payback.

Reuters



A MAN cleans up after two powerful car bombs exploded in Karrada, a predominantly Shiite neighborhood in central Baghdad, Iraq, Jan. 26.

AP

Bomb attacks in 2 days kill 49 in Iraq; major crackdown planned

BAGHDAD—A BOMB KILLED 15 people and wounded 35 in the second attack in as many months on Baghdad's much-loved Friday morning pet market, police sources said.

The blast hit the Ghazil market in the city center an hour before a weekly 11 a.m. vehicle curfew in the Iraqi capital, aimed at protecting mosques over Friday noon prayers.

Bomb attacks killed at least 34 people in Baghdad on Thursday as Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki warned militants from both Shiite and Sunni camps they would have nowhere to hide from a coming major crackdown backed by US troops.

On Monday, one of the deadliest attacks in recent months killed at least 88 people at nearby Bab al-Sharji market.

A police source said witnesses believed Friday's bomb was planted in a cardboard box that the bomber had punched with air holes to pass it off as containing birds. Parrots, canaries and more exotic pets are prime attractions at the market.

On Dec. 1, also a Friday, a car bomb killed three people at Ghazil market. It attracts weekend sightseers in the beleaguered city, where public entertainments are scarce.

Blood stained the ground near the blast site and small birds chirped in battered cages ranged around the small square in front of an ancient Sunni mosque. Tattered black Shiite prayer flags hung in the clear, still winter morning. The population of the crowded central area is religiously mixed.

Reuters

Pregnant women fill up HK hospitals

HONG KONG—SOME HONG Kong hospitals are fully booked by expectant mothers from outside the territory as new measures to stem an influx of mainland Chinese women giving birth in the city loom, officials said Friday.

The new policy, effective from Feb. 1, will bar women at least seven months pregnant from entering Hong Kong unless they are already booked in at a hospital.

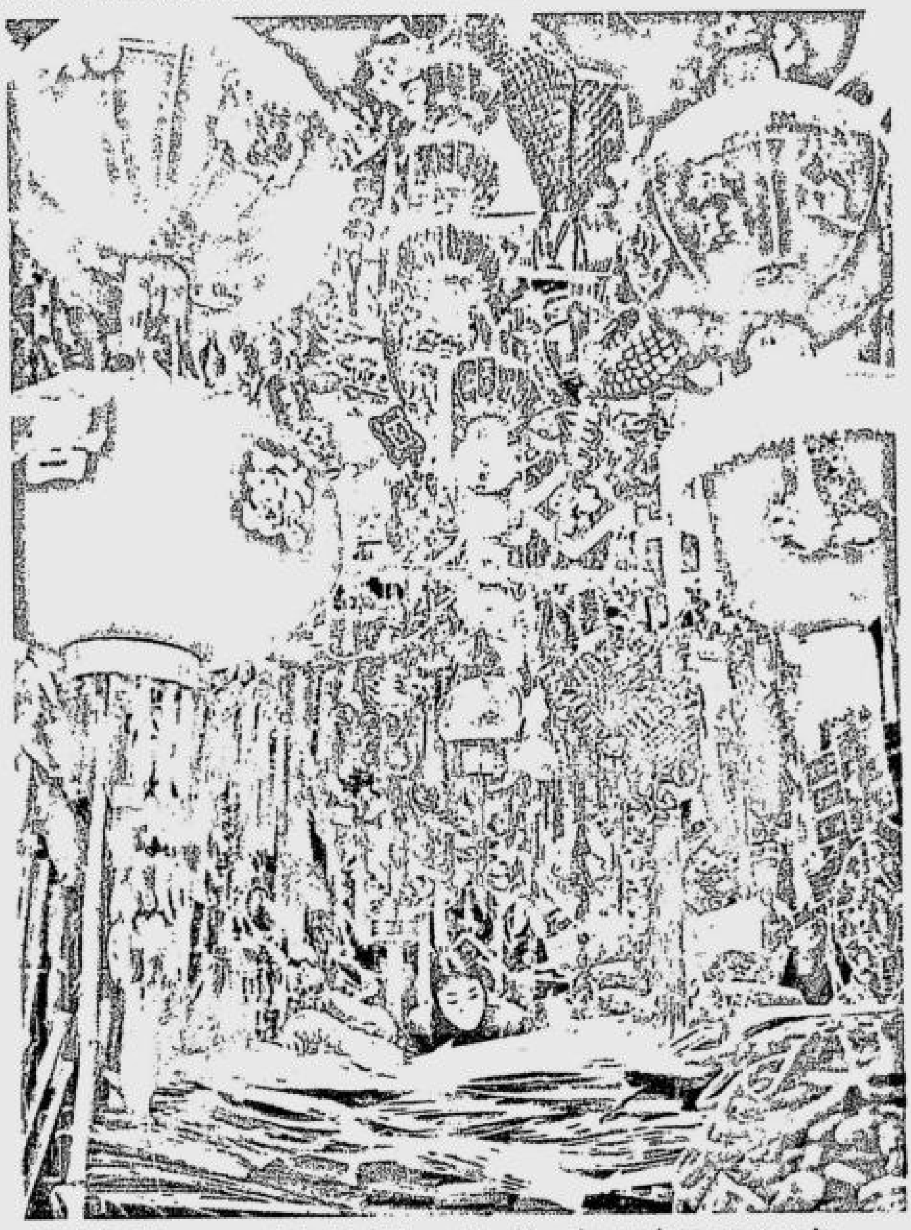
It will apply to all nonresidents but is principally aimed at deterring pregnant women from the mainland seeking last-minute admissions to hospital emergency wards for deliveries.

The authorities want to crack down on unpaid bills—minimum charges for nonresidents will be nearly doubled—and free up resources by prioritizing residents.

Babies born in Hong Kong to at least one parent of Chinese origin are also automatically granted Hong Kong citizenship, which is seen as a way for children to enjoy the territory's medical, social welfare and education advantages.

A week before the measures come into effect, nearly 700 expectant mothers have made an appointment with public hospitals in Hong Kong.

AFP



A VENDOR is surrounded with Chinese New Year decorations at a store in Xiangfan, Hubei province in China Jan. 26. The Chinese celebrate Spring Festival with the Lunar New Year, which falls on Feb. 18 this year.

REUTERS

Smuggle try awakens new fear over uranium

TBILISI, GEORGIA—LAST JANUARY, A Russian man with sunken cheeks and a wispy mustache crossed into Georgia and traveled to Tbilisi by car along a high mountain road. In two plastic bags in his leather jacket, Georgian authorities say, he carried 100 grams of uranium so refined that it could help fuel an atom bomb.

The Russian, Oleg Khinsagov, had come to meet a buyer who he believed would pay him $1 million and deliver the material to a Muslim man from "a serious organization," the authorities say.

The uranium was a sample, just under four ounces, and the deal a test: If all went smoothly, he had boasted, he would sell a far larger cache stored in his apartment back in Vladikavkaz, 2 or 3 kilograms of the rare material, 4.5 to 6.5 pounds, which in expert hands is enough to make a small bomb.

The buyer, it turned out, was a Georgian agent. Alerted to Mr. Khinsagov's ambitions by spies in South Ossetia, Georgian officials arrested him and confiscated his merchandise. After a secret trial, the smuggler was sentenced to eight and a half years in prison.

Until now, all but the vague outlines of the case have remained secret. But an examination of the episode, and a similar one in 2003, suggests that the region's political instability and culture of rampant corruption continue to provide a fertile breeding ground for illicit commerce in atomic materials.

Interviews with Georgian and American officials, along with a review of confidential government documents, provide a glimpse into a world of smugglers who slip across poorly policed borders and the agents who try to stop them.

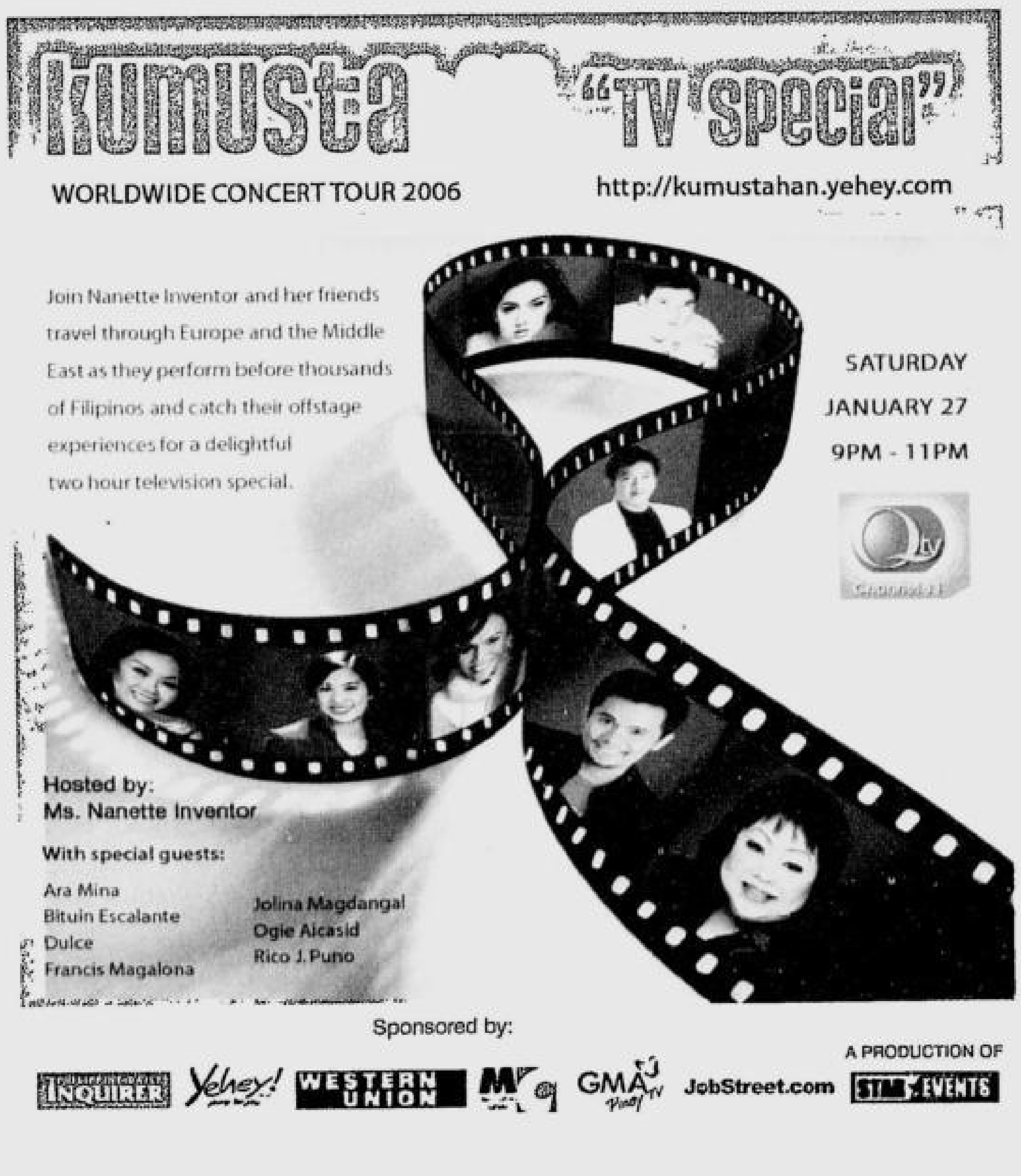
The illicit trade—not just in atomic goods but in everything from stolen cars to furs to counterfeit $100 bills—thrives especially in Georgia, where tiny separatist regions have broken away to become lawless criminal havens.

This latest uranium seizure, said the American ambassador here, John F. Tefft, "highlights how smuggling and loose border control associated with Georgia's separatist conflicts" pose a threat "not just to Georgia but to all the international community."

What is most worrisome about the two most recent case, nuclear experts say, is the material itself: in large enough quantities, it could provide a terrorist with an instant solution to the biggest challenge in making a nuclear weapon, obtaining the fuel.

The uranium seized in both 2003 and 2006 had been enriched to nearly 90 percent U-235, according to Russian and American government analyses obtained by The New York Times. Though the quantities were too small to make a bomb, that level of purity is ideal for doing so.

New York Times News Service



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Russia to build 4 nuke plants in India

NEW DELHI—INDIA SEALED A wide-ranging package of agreements with Russia on Thursday, the first day of a summit meeting intended to demonstrate that their longstanding relationship had not deteriorated as a result of India's growing engagement with the United States.

In a joint statement issued after President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia met with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India, Russia offered to build four new nuclear power plants in India, in addition to the two reactors it is already building here.

"Energy security is the most important of the emerging dimensions of our strategic partnership," Singh said. "Russia's position as a global leader on energy issues is widely recognized."

As India's economy booms, the prospect of growing energy shortages has become a major driver of its foreign policy. Describing Russia as a "special friend" of India, Singh added that despite the "sea change" that had occurred in international affairs over the past decade, "Russia remains indispensable to India's strategic interests."

This was Putin's first visit to India since the United States agreed to cooperate with India on its civilian nuclear power program last year, and the Indian government was at pains to show that the agreement had done nothing to dilute the warmth of India's affection for its historic partner, Russia.

Singh went to the airport to meet the Russian leader as he stepped off his plane, a pointed gesture of respect previously extended only to President Bush and King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

Putin will be the guest of honor at India's Republic Day celebrations on Friday. Much of the weaponry on display will be Soviet-made, a testament to the earlier close friendship between the countries in the 1970s and 1980s.

Experts said the government's decision to extend this prestigious invitation to Putin this year was symbolic of a desire to demonstrate India's continued independence in its foreign policy, despite the close relationship it has forged with the United States with the signing of the nuclear agreement.

NYT

KASHMIRI girls wearing traditional dress perform a song during India's Republic Day celebrations in Srinagar Jan. 26.

REUTERS

WHAT'S INSIDE
Harbour five, Mail N More eye final four
/A22

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Bulls snap Mavericks' win streak
/A24

Quality against numbers in basketball unity tussle

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES (BAP) may have the numbers but the unity-driven Samahang Basketbol Pilipinas (SBP) has the sock and quality when it comes to forming the best national squad to represent the country in international meets.

Documents obtained by the INQUIRER showed the BAP has an edge in the number of affiliates, but the SBP no longer lagged as when it first started its bid to become the country's national federation.

Based on the documents, BAP's membership has dropped to 54 from as high as 66 from the time it started to cooperate with Pilipinas Basketball for the SBP creation. The membership of a handful of BAP groups are still under dispute.

At least 12 clubs or leagues, including big ones like National Basketball Conference, Cebu Basketball League and National Athletic Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities, have reportedly switched allegiance to the SBP over the past weeks.

This beefed up SBP's stock to 35.

Top four leagues

But beyond the numbers are the quality of member-clubs allied with the two groups. On the SBP side are the top four leagues in the country—the Philippine Basketball Association, the Philippine Basketball League, the University Athletic Association of the Philippines and the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

"We're not looking at it that way," said PBA commissioner Noli Eala. "What we are still after is the unity of all interested stakeholders in basketball. That's what the SBP stands for and that's what we hope to accomplish in the Unity Congress.

"Of course, it's nice to always have as an assurance that the biggest leagues have sided with the SBP, because in terms of representing the country, we are assured of being able to form the best possible teams we can send abroad."

Best representation

National teams of the past have been culled from those four leagues, and the SBP is counting on its ability to form the best representation for the country in international meets as it seeks to gain recognition of the Philippine Olympic Committee.

The source who furnished the INQUIRER with the list of clubs affiliated with the BAP and the SBP said the latest exodus of clubs or leagues is expected to cripple BAP's persistent campaign to become the sole governing body of the sport.

Eala, however, said that the Unity Congress on Feb. 5 will still be the main determinant as to how far the SBP can take its drive for unification.

"We will see if the basketball stakeholders can look beyond their parochial interests and work for the good of basketball," said Eala, the designated SBP spokesman.

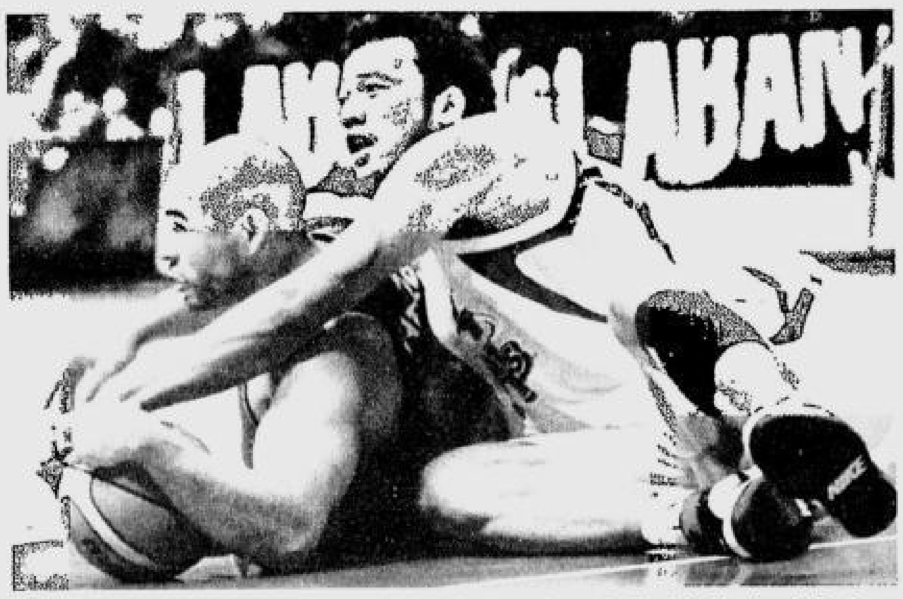
"The invitation is open to all stakeholders to attend the Unity Congress, where every group will be declared a probationary member.

"If they do not attend, it's either they waive their membership or they're just waiting for developments to happen before they make their decision."

Already in the SBP fold, according to the same source, are province-based leagues and groups. Some BAP-affiliated groups like the M. Lhuillier Sports Development Foundation in Cebu, have denied crossing over but have promised to join the congress.

The SBP membership comes from Pilipinas Basketball, the BAP rival that has aligned itself with the unity drive launched by business tycoon Manny V. Pangilinan.

At least four clubs or leagues, however, are listed under both PB-SBP and BAP, although they were still counted by both camps as their own.



TALK 'N TEXT'S Jay Washington (right) forces a jump ball with Ginebra's Rudy Hatfield in yesterday's PBA action. ***See story in Late Sports on A16.*** AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Cojuangco: RP caging needs MVP

By June Navarro

PHILIPPINE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco yesterday wondered where RP basketball would be headed without a patron who is "committed to fix the problem and put the national dribblers back on the international sporting map."

Cojuangco singled out tycoon Manny V. Pangilinan who has promised to work for the country's possible hosting of the Southeast Asian Basketball Association championships in May and the pre-qualifying tournament for the Olympics next year.

"My only fear is that one day Mr. Pangilinan might grow tired of the BAP's hardline stance and leave the sport," said Cojuangco. "If that happens, basketball is dead."

"He doesn't need this," he added. "But he's totally committed to this endeavor and we're lucky to have him.

There's so many things that could be done for basketball that were set aside because of this problem."

SBP officials briefed the POC chief about their recent trip to the international basketball federation (Fiba) headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, the other night.

Cojuangco, in turn, assured Pangilinan and company that the POC would accommodate the SBP as soon as the new organization completes the unification process.

After the Unity Congress on Feb. 5, the next step for the SBP is to form the national team as required by the Tokyo communique before asking for recognition from the POC and the Fiba.

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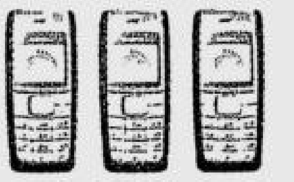

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Barrera not hot at rematch; Marquez wants Pacman bad

MARQUEZ

By Francis Ochoa

MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA AND JUAN Manuel Marquez, who slug it out on Mar. 17 for the WBC super featherweight crown at the Mandalay Bay Casino on March 17, have taken opposite corners at the mention of Manny Pacquiao.

While Marquez still hopes to get a rematch against Pacquiao, Barrera has coyly deflected the issue, opting instead to announce he is retiring at the end of 2007—whether or not he gets a fight with the Gen. Santos City star, regarded as the No. 1 pound-for-pound fighter in the world.

"I am past that fight," Barrera told boxingconfidential.com. "I wanted it. But if it does not happen, it does not happen. I am looking to retire in 2007."

Barrera (63-4, 42 KOs) and Marquez (46-3-1, 35 KOs) spoke with the boxing website during the press conference hosted by Golden Boy Promotions chief Oscar De La Hoya for their fight.

And it was Marquez who is hot after Pacquiao.

"It is like a small thorn in a lion's paw," Marquez told the website. "I want to remove that thorn, of drawing with Pacquiao, from my paw."

The "lion" was floored three times when he faced Pacquiao in May 2004, but fought brilliantly to a controversial draw. A judge later admitted he erred in scoring, denying Pacquiao of victory.

A rematch was supposed to be in the works, but Marquez balked at the purse and took on Chris John for a lower amount instead and, worse, lost that fight.

Barrera had been demolished by Pacquiao when the two met in San Antonio, Texas, in 2003. Pacquiao scored an 11th-round technical knockout of the Mexican icon, one so decisive and brutal many people thought it would be the end of Barrera's career.

But Barrera bounced back, beating archrival Erik Morales to end their trilogy in his favor and then scoring a decision over Rocky Juarez, a fight where he was booed by the crowd for playing safe.

A legal battle betweed De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions and Bob Arum's Top Rank ruined what could have been a highly-anticipated rematch between the two super featherweights.

Still, De La Hoya, who promotes Barrera and Marquez, said that he is willing to arrange a fight between his fighters and Pacquiao if that is what they want.

"If Marco wants that fight before he retires this year, I will work at it," De La Hoya said.

Harbour five, Mail N More eye final four

AN "UNSELFISH" BIG MAN COULD STAND IN THE WAY OF HARBOUR CENTRE'S semifinal bid in the PBL Silver Cup today at the Olivarez College Sports Center in Parañaque.

Cebuana Lhuillier-Pera Padala will be banking on a revved-up Ken Bono in its 2 p.m. quarterfinal match against the Port Masters, who only need to win once to advance to the semifinals.

"Bono is very unselfish," said Moneymen coach Luigi Trillo. "He gets his teammates involved. We knew he's going to be doubled (defensively), we're preparing for him to be doubled again. But he's willing to sacrifice. He's also playing good defense."

Just like Harbour Centre, Mail and More will be toting a twice-to-beat advantage when it takes on Henkel Sista at 4 p.m.

Mail and More, however, will be shooting for a semifinal slot without coach Lawrence Chongson, who left for Hong Kong yesterday due to a prior commitment.

Assistant coach Allan Gregorio will man the Comets' sidelines.

But for Henkel Sista, the real threat will be the inside presence of Cebuano slotman JR Quiñahan.

"We have to stop Quiñahan, he's the focal point of Mail and More's offense and defense," said Sista mentor Caloy Garcia.

The winner of the quarterfinal tiff between Harbour Centre and Cebuana Lhuillier will take on early semifinalist Toyota Otis.

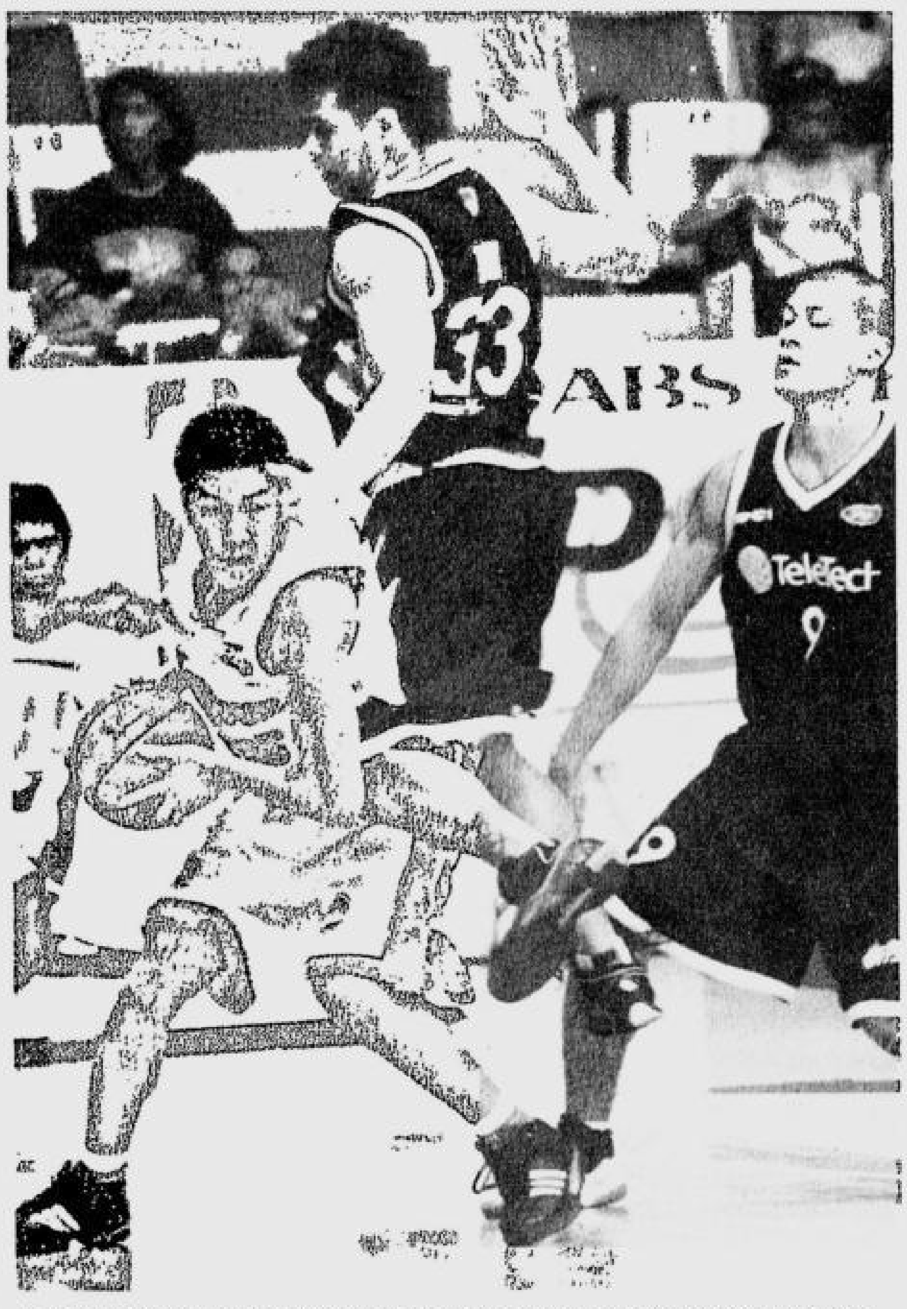
Hapee-PCU, similarly waiting in the wings for a best-of-five semifinal series, will square off with the winner of the Mail and More and Henkel Sista tussle.

Although the Comets had the upperhand over the Super Sealers in the elimination round, 65-58, Garcia pointed to the improved performances of Lawrence Bonus, Khiel Misa and Conrad Bauzon.

For the Moneymen, Bono, Kramer and Macky Escalona starred in their 81-72 triumph over TeleTech in the knockout phase.

Jasmine W. Payo

GAMES TODAY
(Olivarez College Sports Center)
2 p.m.—Cebuana Lhuillier-Pera Padala vs Harbour Centre
4 p.m.—Mail and More vs Henkel Sista



A FAKING Reed Hontilla (left) of Harbour Centre draws a foul from TeleTech's Eugene Tan (center) during a recent match won by the Port Masters. LYN RILLON

Jover powers FEU booters past Tigers; Eagles score

ACE STRIKER ROMNICK JOVER STRUCK twice as Far Eastern University nipped University of Santo Tomas, 2-1, Thursday at the Ateneo football grounds in Katipunan and stayed on top in men's football in the UAAP Season 69.

Jover's goals in the 14th and 18th minutes sandwiched UST's lone goal in the 15th through Lester Sobremisana as the Tamaraws notched their third win in as many matches.

The Tamaraws played solid defense the rest of the way to foil the aggressive Tigers, who kept second place in the five-team standings with a 2-1-1 win-draw-loss record.

Jeremiah Clemente scored the only goal of the second game as Ateneo broke into the win colum for the first time with a hard-earned 1-0 decision of University of the East.

Clemente broke free in the 50th minute for the volley that left no chance for the UE goalkeeper.

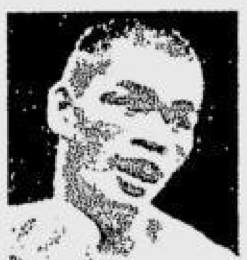
The Blue Eagles rose to 1-1-1, a point in front of the cellar-dwelling Warriors (0-3-0). Idle University of the Philippines kept third spot with a 1-2-0 card.

Tomorrow's matches ending the first-round eliminations, also at the Ateneo field, pits UP against Ateneo at 1 p.m. and FEU versus UE at 3 p.m.

In the women's bracket, UP (0-2-0) goes up against Ateneo (0-1-1) at 1 p.m. and FEU (1-0-1) battles UST (0-2-0) at 3 p.m.

Fencing gets going on Feb. 10 and 11 at the Blue Eagle gym. *With a report from Jasmine W. Payo*

Jaca battles feared Indon for WBO title



JACA: Fresh bid

FILIPINO PROSPECT JIMREX JACA goes for the WBO Asia Pacific super-featherweight title when he fights Indonesian titleholder Simson Butar Butar on Feb. 24 underneath the Z Gorres-Fernando Montiel "Moment of Truth" card at the Cebu City Sports Complex.

Promoter Sammy Gello-ani said Jaca, who made a gallant losing stand against Mexican Juan Manuel Marquez last November, will fight the feared Indon champion before taking part in the huge May 5 card pitting Oscar De la Hoya against Floyd Mayweather Jr.

"Everything is in place," Gello-ani announced yesterday. "Jimrex will be fighting for the title against the very dangerous champion from Indonesia."

Butar Butar gained notoriety among Filipino fans when he dethroned Czar Amonsot in a single round for the WBO crown last Sept. 23 in Tagbilaran City in a repeat of his TKO win over Amonsot in 2005.

Jaca pushed Juan Manuel Marquez to the limit in Texas in November last year before yielding in the homestretch. The Filipino's performance prompted Oscar De la Hoya to announce that he would give him a slot in the mammoth May 5 event at the MGM Grand.

The Sibulan, Negros-raised Jaca is training at the ALA Gym under the guidance of Robert Bubuli, who had been tapped by Golden Boy Promotions for the job. *Salven L. Lagumbay, Contributor*

Asia's granddaddy; Erap's son

By Percy D. Della

COMMENTARY

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA—FORGET about about an obituary.

Cancel the requiems.

Tell the florist to hold off on the wreaths.

And please, drive the wailers away. It's not their cue to cry. Not just yet.

Granddaddy is pale as death itself, but he's still alive.

Granddaddy is very old and in failing health.

Will he live another month? Another year?

Your concern is as grave as mine.

Welcome to the 94th Philippine Golf Open, which, by any other name, should matter to true sports spectators like you and me.

To befit its stature, the Philippine Open was supposed to kick off the Asian tour early this month.

But commercial sponsorship bottomed out. So like an addendum to a book, the Open has been re-penciled for Feb. 1-4.

Asia's longest running and oldest golf championship used to be a destination. Now it has become a distraction, an afterthought, it seemed to the Asian circuit.

The Philippine Open was never a lucrative stop. But it was so steeped in tradition, some of golf's most illustrious names—Gary Player, Sam Snead, Bruce Crampton and Kel Nagle—played it in its heyday.

Of course, local golf's most revered players—Larry Montes, Celestino Tugot and Ben Arda—made their mark by winning the Open multiple times.

If only for its history, granddaddy used to be an Asian diamond. Now it's cubic zirconium to say the least.

There was this grand design by local golf officials and the Asian Tour to restore Asia's grand old man to its former stature? What's become of that plan?

Is it a case of sputtering sponsorship? Prospective contributors, it seems, would rather put money into less worthy sports. So what else is new?

It took the checkbooks of two moneyed men to salvage, I mean save, this year's Open.

Will someone step up to the plate next year?

Or will the Open die a slow death, just like another revered Filipino sports tradition, the Tour ng Pilipinas bicycle classic?

Will there be mourning again all over the archipelago?

You're concern is as grave as mine.

* * *

I don't know Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, the deposed president of the Basketball Association of the Philippines. But I certainly knew his dad, the former president.

I covered Joseph Estrada on the road in the United States in the spring of 1976. For the duration, I switched hats from a sportswriter's to that of an entertainment reporter.

Erap—the great actor and then mayor of San Juan, Rizal—led a galaxy of show business stars on that journey from sea to shining sea.

We were goodwill ambassadors sent to lure stateside Filipinos to either come home for a visit or come home for good.

The long trip wore the body out but soothed the soul.

Jinggoy adores Erap so much he loves being joined at the hips with his father.

What do you know? The two of them appear to suffer the same fate.

Erap was filled with good intentions for the Filipino people but allegedly filled his pockets with their money and proceeds from an illegal numbers' game.

Jinggoy was filled with good intentions for a sport he loves, but was unceremoniously dumped anyway.

Erap and son are joined at the hips indeed.

Bardon seeks OPBF fly crown March 18

PHILIPPINE CHAMPION AND TOP OPBF CONtender Jojo Bardon will vie for the vacant OPBF flyweight title on March 18 against No. 4 Masaharu Naganawa at the International Conference Hall in Nagoya, Japan.

The 27-year-old Cebu-based San Carlos native, coming off a win over Jun Eraham, will be fighting in his biggest bout yet.

Naganawa boasts a 11-0-2 (2 KOs) record.

In his last fight, Naganawa stopped Filipino Gilbert De la Torres in seven rounds in Nagoya for his only bout against a foreign boxer. *Salven L. Lagumbay, Contributor*

Mendoza starts Chair's Cup defense

TURALBA

LIPA CITY—MARK Mendoza opens defense of his overall title today in the ninth edition of the Chairman's Cup at Club Malarayat's three nine-hole layouts.

Tee-off time is 9 a.m. shotgun style.

Proceeds of the 18-hole tournament, featuring a banner field of 216 member-guest pairs, will benefit the De La Salle Lipa scholars of Malarayat chair Tony Turalba.

"This is one tournament which serves a noble purpose and provides a fun event for all of the friends of Malarayat," Turalba said.

All players will receive gift certificates from Fury Eyewear and items from the Active Group. A Yamaha cart and a set of Mizuno golf clubs are being staked as hole-in-one prizes.

A skills challenge will be held in the afternoon before the awards ceremonies.

The fund-raising event is also backed by Active Group, AVT Properties, Asian Spirit, Pacsports, Malarayat Privilege Circle, Kart Plaza and Master Sports.

SPORTSWATCH

Football Fiesta kicks off at La Salle-Zobel

DE LA SALLE-ZOBEL PLAYS HOST TO THE 4TH DLSZ FOOTBALL FIESTA today and Feb. 4 on the school campus in Ayala Alabang, Muntinlupa City. Organized by the DLSZ Parents Association Sports Development Foundation headed by chair Luigi Lacson and sponsored by Toyota Motors Philippines and LBC Flowers Express, the tournament will be joined in by teams from Metro Manila and nearby provinces. Nike and Adidas provided the match balls. DLSZ executive director Ronald Holmes and Moises Lozada, head of the school's Sports Development Office, urged players to join the event.

PCSO am boxing at Cantada center

THE PCSO AMATEUR BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS UNFOLD TODAY AT THE multi-purpose hall of the Cantada Sports Center in Bagumbayan, Taguig City. Organized by Joe Cantada Sports and supervised by the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines, the event features at least 40 up-and-coming boxers in 20 matchups. Lunch will be served to participants and guests of promoters Boy and Gerard Cantada. Abap president Manny Lopez and secretary general Roger Fortaleza will attend the competitions which will be aired in the regular Tuesday program Fistorama starting at 3 p.m. on RPN 9.

PBA ref to officiate China-Korea game

A REFEREE OF THE PHILIPPINE BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION (PBA) HAS been tapped as a neutral game official for the dual meet starting this Sunday between the Korea Basketball League and the Chinese Basketball Association. Roberto Ting Jr., who boasts a fine background in Fiba competitions, will work with a Korean referee and a Chinese in the two-game spectacle. The first match is slated in Pudong, Shanghai, this Sunday, followed by the second game the next day in Inchon, South Korea. "That's a big honor for the PBA," said PBA technical chief Perry Martinez. "The message sent is that the other leagues acknowledge the competence of the PBA referees."

WVL SIZZLES
A San Antonio de Padua College defender foils a punch shot from a School of St. Anthony spiker in a recent game in the high school competitive division of the Milo BEST Women's Volleyball League at the Xavier High School court in Greenhills. SAPC won. A total of 44 teams from Metro Manila schools are vying for top honors in four categories of the competitions.

200 entries collide in Las Piñas

TWO-HUNDRED PARTICIPANTS CONVERGE TODAY AT THE LAS PIÑAS Coliseum for the "Fastest Win One-Cock Timbangan" starting at 12 noon. Registration will be from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. The event comes on the heels of another fastest-win event on Thursday where 125 entries saw action. The fastest-win champion will recieve P35,000; second, P20,000; third, P10,000 and fourth to 10th placers, P5,000. Host Jessie Banas of Cavite pegged the entry fee at P1,100. LPC's "Pintakasi Hackfights" resumes tomorrow.

TJT derby kicks off at Roligon today

UPCOMING BREEDERS TAKE CENTER STAGE IN THE FIRST "TJT COCKING Academy 4-Cock Derby starting at 2 p.m. today at Roligon Mega Cockpit in Parañaque City. More than 100 fights are on tap in the event sponsored by Montanez Agri, Purina, Vitarich and Gromax Panabong. Hosts Dexter'Guce and Dr. Teddy Tanchangco, officers of the TJT Cocking Academy based in Tagaytay, Cavite, have put up a guaranteed prize of P400,000 for an entry fee of P5,500. As bonus, the fastest-win champion will recieve P50,000.

RP epicenter of international pool

YEN MAKABENTA IS A VISIONARY. HE KNEW that the 2006 Manila World Pool Championship was bound to lose money, yet he pushed through with it.

He may have lost a bundle, but Makabenta proved that the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines, which he heads, is capable of holding the prestigious event big time. Thus, Makabenta played a pivotal role in making the Philippines the "Epicenter of International Pool," according to the world-renowned Billiards Digest in its recent 11th Annual Awards.

For his daring move to bring the WPC to the country for the first time, Makabenta was named Man of the Year. He was also credited for starting a billiards academy and creating an official ranking system that would soon put order in the Philippines' deep roster of cue masters.

The year's biggest story, of course, was the Filipinos unprecedented dominance in world pool. The year's five richest events saw at least a Filipino in the final with three—Efren "Bata" Reyes, Reyes-Francisco "Django" Bustamante and Ronato Alcano—eventually emerging as champions.

MAKABENTA: Vision

REYES: Outstanding

ALCANO: Improved

ORCOLLO: Breakout

Apart from Reyes, honored for Most Outstanding Performance for topping the IPT World Open 8-Ball Championship, and former world No. 1 Bustamante, who teamed up with Reyes in ruling the inaugural World Cup of Pool, at least five other Filipinos made their mark last year.

Ronato Alcano ruled the Manila WPC and earned the Most Improved Player award while Dennis Orcollo, who topped the World Pool League, nailed the Breakout Player of the Year honor. Marlon Manalo, Rodolfo Luat and 2004 World Pool champion Alex Pagulayan also shone in the international arena.

After squeezing himself into the 64-man main draw, Alcano dished out his own brand of pool wizardry to win the Manila WPC at the expense of German Ralf Souquet, who was eventually adjudged Player of the Year, nipping Reyes.

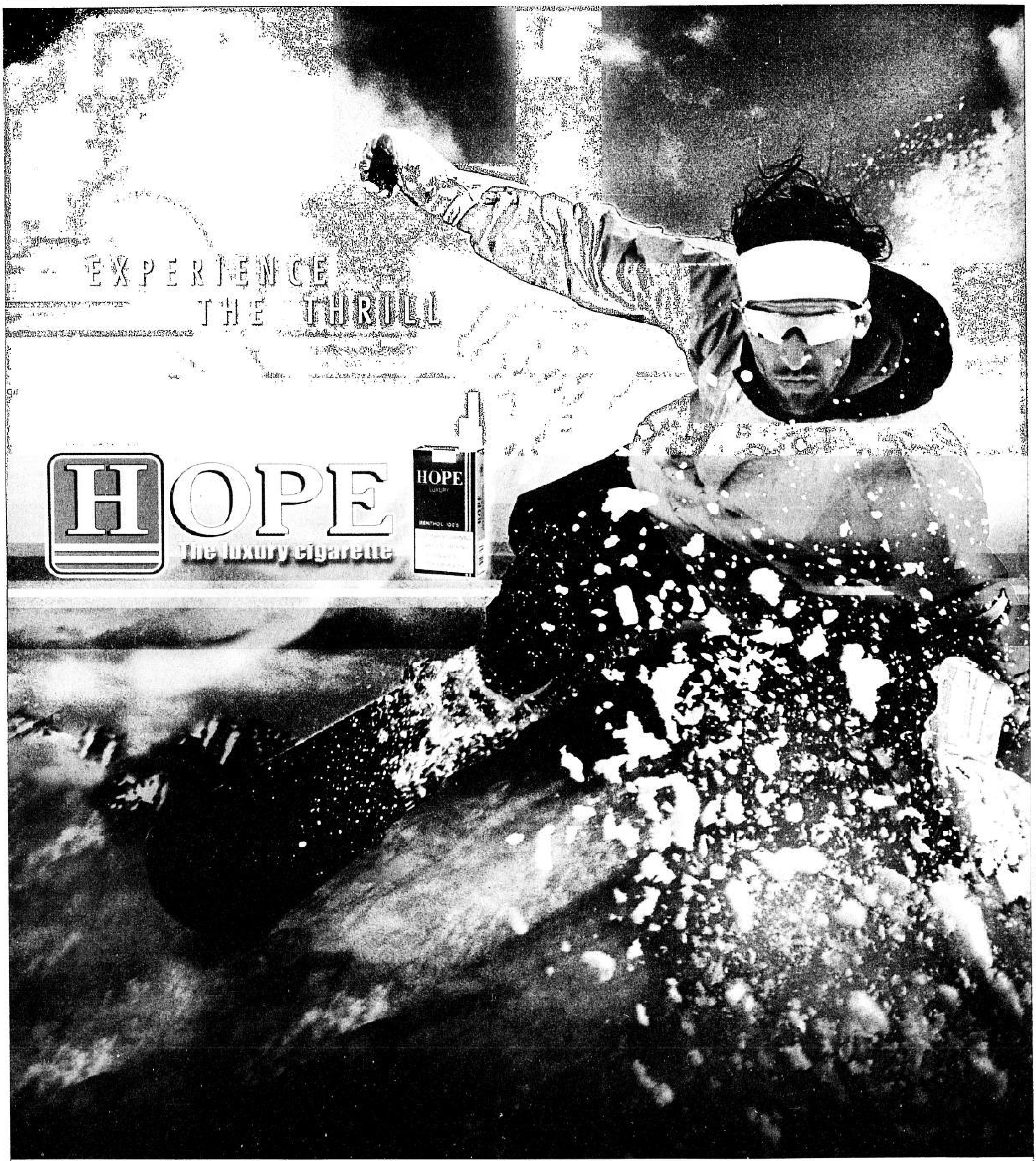
Classiest crowd

After losing to Alcano in the final, Souquet couldn't contain his frustration and broke into tears. Spontaneously, the crowd of more than a thousand began chanting "Souquet! Souquet!"

That moving scene of respect and gratitude, displaying the best side of Filipinos, earned for the PICC fans the "Classiest Crowd of the Year" distinction.

And it would not have materialized, had Makabenta not taken the WPC plunge. It hurt his pocket, but not for long.

With the smashing success of the Manila WPC, gate-wise and exposure-wise, Makabenta is likely to recoup his losses in this year's edition. *Roy Luarca*



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Bulls snap Mavericks' win streak

DALLAS guard Jason Terry (left) and Chicago playmaker Kirk Hinrich battle for possession. REUTERS

CHICAGO—BEN GORDON SCORED 30 POINTS, LUOL Deng added 21 and the Chicago Bulls snapped the Dallas Mavericks' eight-game winning streak with a 96-85 victory in the NBA on Thursday.

Dirk Nowitzki led Dallas with 28 points and 11 rebounds.

After nearly blowing an early 17-point lead, the Bulls pulled away late in the fourth quarter.

Nowitzki's 3 closed Chicago's lead to 79-76 with 4:31 left.

PJ Brown followed with a basket for Chicago and Kirk Hinrich followed with a 3, making it 84-76. Erick Dampier's dunk for Dallas cut the lead to 86-81, but Brown answered for Chicago by going around Nowitzki for a basket and hitting a jumper to put Chicago up 90-81 with 1:16 left.

Brown scored of six of his 12 points in the fourth quarter.

Clippers 102, Nets 101

At Los Angeles, Cuttino Mobley made a 3-pointer with 0.6 left on the clock, sending the hard-luck Nets to their third straight one-point loss.

Elton Brand and reserve forward Corey Maggette each scored 18 points, helping Los Angeles (21-21) climb back to the .500 mark for the first time since Dec. 11. Sam Cassell added 15 points and 10 assists.

Vince Carter scored 33 points for the Nets, who had won nine of 11 prior to this three-game skid.

They were beaten Monday at Sacramento on a jumper by Mike Bibby with 10.3 seconds remaining, then were nipped at the buzzer on a 17-footer by Golden State's Monta Ellis on Wednesday. *AP*

NBA TODAY ON BASKETBALL TV

9 a.m.—Washington vs Detroit (replays @ 4 p.m. & 9:30 p.m.)

James leads vote; Arenas rallies to pocket All-Star starting spot

NEW YORK—WASHINGTON WIZARDS star Gilbert Arenas surged past Vince Carter in the final days of NBA All-Star game voting to claim the second Eastern Conference guard spot by only 3,010 votes on Thursday.

LeBron James, the MVP last year, led all players with more than 2.5 million votes for the Feb. 18 game in Las Vegas.

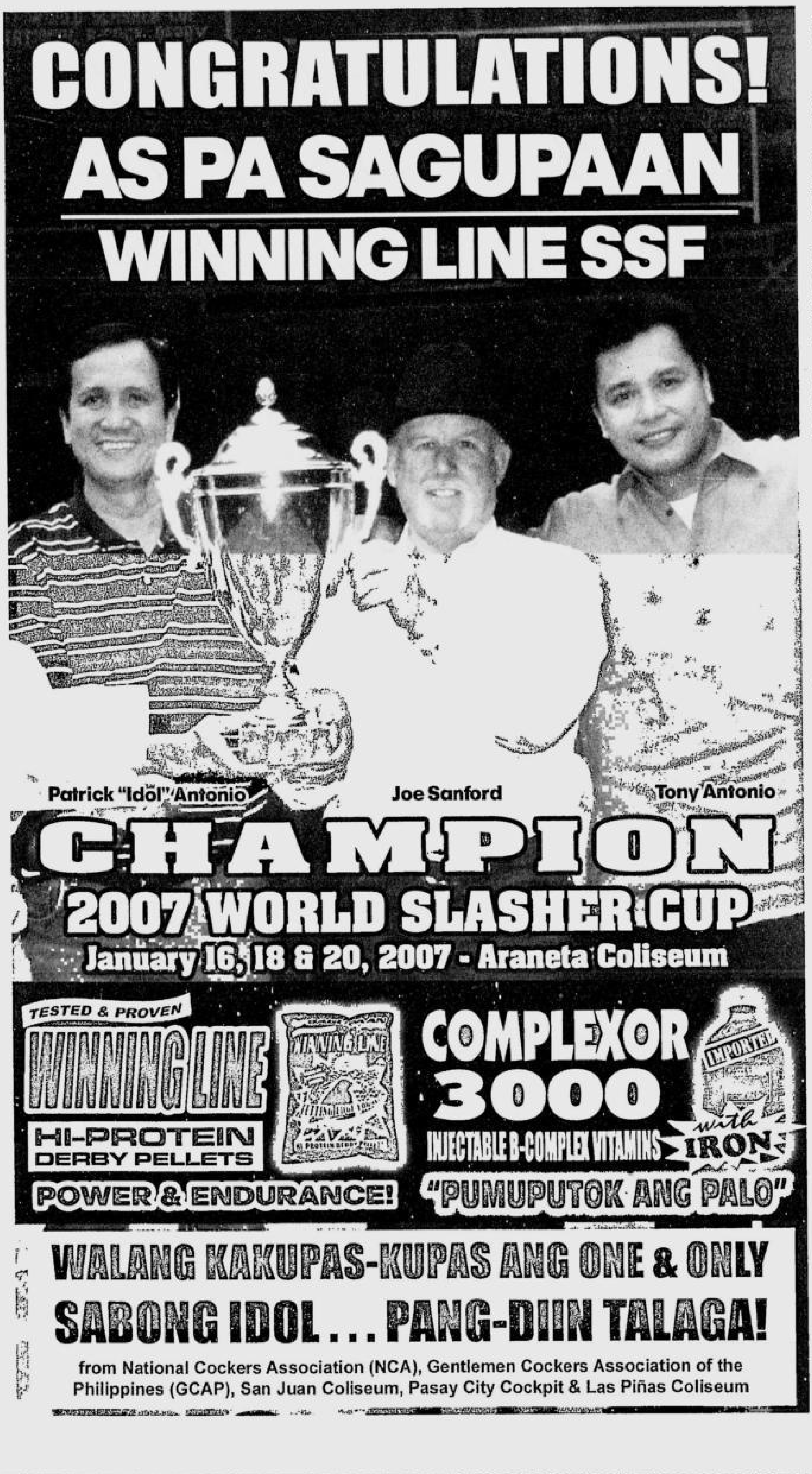
The first All-Star game held outside an NBA city will maintain one traditional look: Shaquille O'Neal was chosen to his 14th straight All-Star game, tying Jerry West and Karl Malone for the most consecutive selections.

Arenas was 214,460 votes behind Carter two weeks ago, but finished with 1,454,166 to Carter's 1,451,156.

"It is an unbelievable feeling," Arenas said. "Two years ago, I was voting myself in for the game. Now fans are voting me in, and I'm going to do what they are looking for. I've got something to give back to the fans during All-Star weekend."

Arenas, O'Neal and James will be joined in the East lineup by Dwyane Wade and another first-time starter, Toronto forward Chris Bosh.

Injured Houston center Yao Ming led all West players with more than 2.4 million votes. Kevin Garnett and Tim Duncan were voted in at forward, while Kobe Bryant and Tracy McGrady won the guard spots. *AP*



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from National Cockers Association (NCA), Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP), San Juan Coliseum, Pasay City Cockpit & Las Piñas Coliseum

Gonzalez crushes Haas, sets final date vs Federer

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—TENTH-SEEDed Fernando Gonzalez dominated Germany's Tommy Haas, 6-1, 6-3, 6-1, Friday to reach the Australian Open final.

In a performance reminiscent of top-ranked Roger Federer's rout of Andy Roddick in the other semifinal a night earlier, Gonzalez was nearly flawless, leaving the 12th-seeded Haas stunned and frustrated with a brilliant array of shots that had the capacity crowd gasping.

Gonzalez, once known for a weak backhand and a fragile psyche, has improved both significantly in recent months and has won over thousands of fans here with his powerful serve and forehand.

The Chilean ran off the first 11 points of the match and had 17 winners in the first set without committing a single unforced error. Haas won only 12 points in the seven games.

Gonzalez slipped only slightly in the second set with 12 winners and three unforced errors as Haas, his confidence shattered, spiked his racket once and came close to slamming it into the court on two other occasions.

Haas tried to pick on Gonzalez's backhand, but the Chilean just kept getting back slice after slice until he got a chance to wind up on a forehand and send zingers into the corners.

Gonzalez, who never faced a break point, finished it off with a backhand crosscourt winner for his seventh service break. *AP*

Sharapova, Williams all set

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—THE GRAND Slam rematch of Serena Williams against Maria Sharapova has been two years in the making.

Their initial meeting came in the 2004 Wimbledon final, when Sharapova won her first major. In the 2005 Australian Open semifinals, Sharapova served twice for the match—once in the second set, once in the third—and blew four match points before losing 8-6 in the third.

On Saturday, they meet in the final of the Australian Open.

Sharapova, who beat Kim Clijsters, 6-4, 6-2, in Thursday's semifinals, said that loss at Melbourne Park doesn't hold any special meaning for her rematch with Williams.

"It was just a loss in my career," Sharapova said "I had the opportunity to be in another Grand Slam final. I didn't take them. I've had wins against her. I've had losses against her. That was just a loss."

Since that 2005 match, Sharapova has reached the semifinals at five other Grand Slams, and won the US Open last year.

Williams, who played only four tournaments in 2006 because of a lingering knee injury, hasn't added to her seven Grand Slam titles since she won in Australia two years ago.

WILLIAMS REUTERS

SHARAPOVA AP

The players have split four matches—Williams winning in straight sets at Miami in 2004, Sharapova at Wimbledon, Sharapova in three at the season-ending tour championship in 2004 and Williams in Australia in 2005.

Williams, unseeded and No. 81 when the tournament began, isn't surprised to be in the final. She beat 12th-ranked Nicole Vaidisova, 7-6 (5), 6-4, in the other semifinal.

"I wouldn't say for me it's an astonishing achievement," Williams said. "I would say I am happy more than anything. It's not astonishing or surprising; definitely something I have always expected." *AP*

Tour rookie steals Buick show

SAN DIEGO—US PGA TOUR ROOKIE BRANDT Snedeker had trouble remembering a round he will never forget at the Buick Invitational on Thursday.

Snedeker flirted with golf's magic number until the birdies dried up on the North Course at Torrey Pines and he settled for a 61 to tie the course record and take a two-shot lead.

"The whole front nine was a blur," said Snedeker, who couldn't recall how he birdied some of the holes, much less what those holes even looked like.

But he generated the biggest buzz at the Buick Invitational, where two-time defending champion Tiger Woods opened with a 66 and was reduced to a supporting role.

"To see the crowd kind of work their way back to me from Tiger was kind of nice," said Snedeker, who played two groups behind Woods. "Seeing them cheering me on the last nine holes—although I couldn't bring it in the way they wanted—was still fun. I had a blast."

Woods had just knocked down the flag with a 5-iron for a short eagle putt on the 18th hole when he noticed a scoreboard on his way to the first tee that showed Snedeker at 8 under through seven holes.

"We thought it was a misprint," Woods said. "It came up again, so obviously it was not a misprint. That's some great playing." *AP*

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lakas ng hatak.
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OFW remittances hit all-time high of $14B

'06 record tops BSP's earlier estimate of $13.4B

By Doris C. Dumlao

DOLLARS SENT HOME BY OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS through the banking system and other channels likely hit an all-time high of $14 billion in 2006, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas estimated.

The BSP's original expectation was that total OFW inflows would hit about $13.4 billion for the year against about $12 billion in 2005.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo told reporters that total OFW inflows last year likely ranged between $13 billion and $14 billion, of which $12 to $13 billion were coursed through the banking system.

The high end of the projection was equivalent to about 60 percent of the BSP's foreign exchange reserves, which likewise surged to an all-time high of $23 billion in end-2006.

OFW/B4

IN THIS ISSUE

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- **Peso's expected** strength seen to cut NLEX rates /B4

Economy seen growing 5.7% on high invest flows

By Michelle V. Remo

AN INCREASE IN INVESTMENT INFLOWS will help spur domestic demand and boost the Philippines' economic growth to 5.7 percent this year, according to the Institute of International Finance Inc (IIF).

"Investment has been languishing for two years, but is poised to turn up with greater credit availability and the prospect for improving sales, and as capacity constraints become more binding," said IIF, an organization of foreign financial institutions.

IIF's 5.7-percent economic growth forecast for the Philippines for this year is higher than the 5.4-percent estimate it made last year.

The 2007 forecast, however, was less optimistic than the government's official assumption of between 6.1 to 7 percent.

Analysts said the declining interest rates, marked by the all-time lows in benchmark treasury bills rates, provided a welcoming environment for businesses as bank loans are expected to be cheaper.

IIF said that the projected rise in investment was expected to result in the growth of domestic demand. From the estimated 4.9-percent growth in domestic demand last year, IIF said this could accelerate to 5.1 percent this year.

Private consumption is seen to grow this year by 5.6 percent, while government consumption is projected to rise by 6.6 percent.

Increase in domestic demand would more than compensate for the expected slowdown in exports, IIF said. Exports, a main growth driver for 2006, is seen to slowdown a bit this year because of the projected deceleration in the economies of major export markets, including the United States and Japan.

The expected increase in government consumption is anchored on the anticipated passage of the proposed P1.18-trillion national budget for 2007, which will partly compensate for the use of a reenacted budget last year that curtailed spending and restrained growth.

Last year, with the failure of Congress to pass the proposed P1.053-trillion budget, the government was forced to operate using a

ECONOMY/B4

INDICATORS

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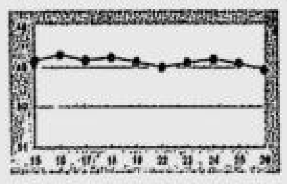


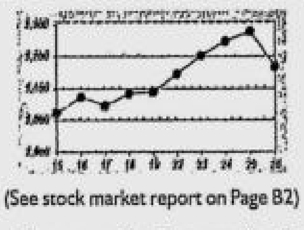
JANUARY

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P49.09 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Jan. 26, 2007

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks end sharply lower

SHARE PRICES CLOSED SHARPLY LOWER yesterday, falling 3.43 percent as losses on Wall Street sparked a regional sell-off and with investors choosing to take profits after a week-long rally, dealers said.

However, they said the market's sharp downturn had been expected as many stocks had become expensive.

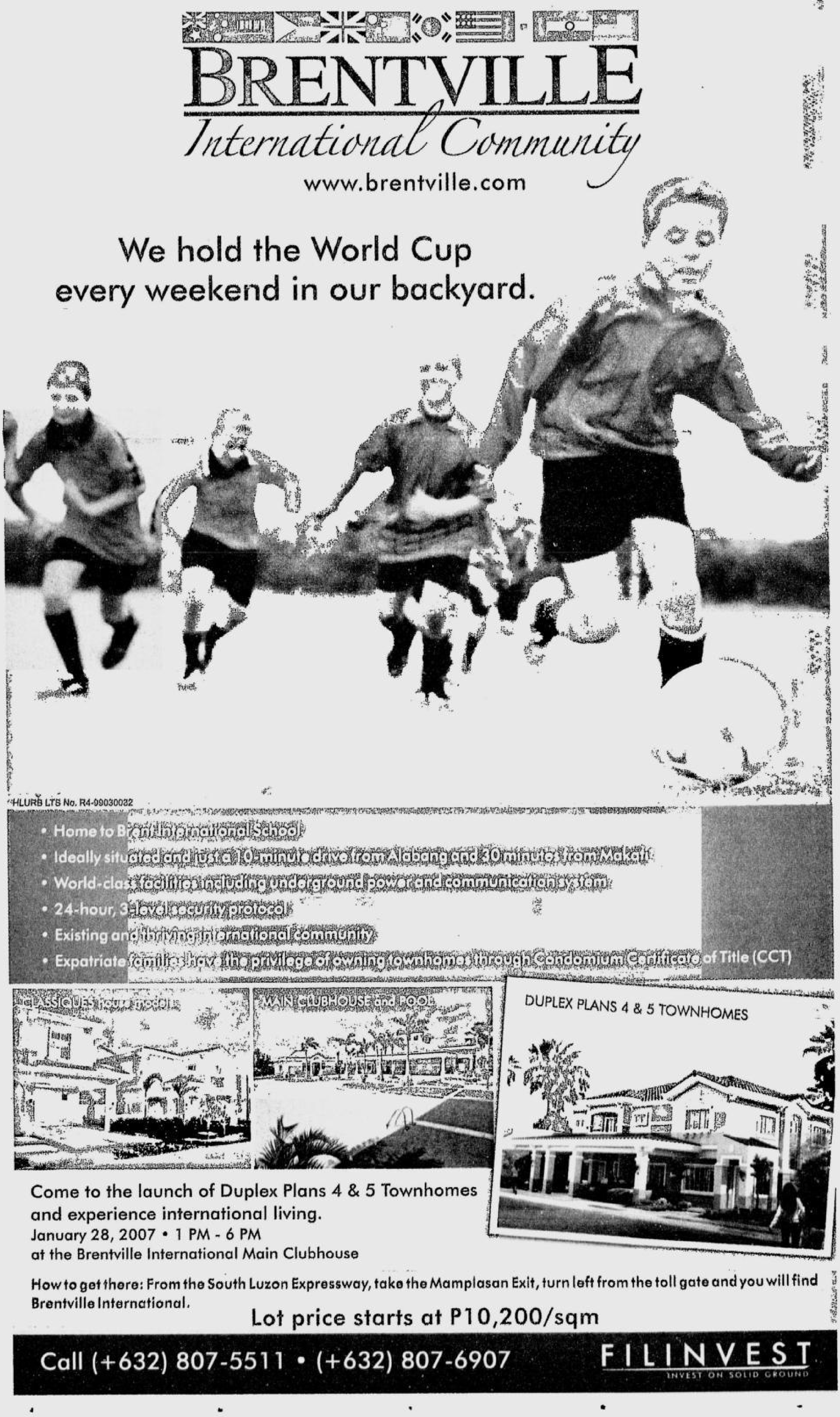
The composite index fell 112.37 points to 3,162.82 after moving between 3,161.95 and 3,275.19.

The broader all-shares index was down 48.13 points to 1,967.92.

Losers beat gainers 89 to 32 with 43 stocks unchanged.

Volume amounted to 3.4 billion shares worth P3.7 billion.

STOCKS/B4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PAL seeks listing of more shares

Move in line with backdoor listing plan

By Daxim L. Lucas

PAL HOLDINGS INC., FORMERLY BAGUIO Gold Holdings, has filed an application with the Philippine Stock Exchange for the listing of some 5 billion additional shares in line with Philippine Airlines' backdoor listing plan.

In a letter to the PSE, PAL Holdings corporate secretary Ma. Cecilia L. Pesayco said the shares were issued pursuant to the debt-to-equity conversion agreement between the company and Trustmark Holdings Corp.

The application for listing came a few days after the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) approved the increase in the holding firm's authorized capital stock from P400 million to P20 billion, as a prelude to PAL's backdoor listing.

Once approved, the listing of the additional shares will complete the debt-to-equity swap, which will see PAL Holdings own the shares of Trustmark which, in turn, owns PAL.

Sources in PAL said the backdoor was a prelude to the airline eventually raising money from the capital market.

"[Capital raising] is one of the options we're looking at over the longer term," according to a ranking official of the firm.

Another PAL official said, however, that any capital raising activity would only happen once the airline concludes its rehabilitation program in two years, in part because of the many restrictions imposed on it by foreign creditors.

In the meantime, the backdoor listing will help PAL owners get a firmer grip on how the company is valued by the broader market, the official said.

PAL Holding's shares closed at P3.60 apiece on the PSE, lower by P0.15 from the previous day's close, with P1.1 million changing hands.

Last year, Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.—the precursor of PAL Holdings—announced that it would pay P136 million or P1 a share, for 82 percent of PAL shares within one year from the date of acquisition of those shares.

The newly formed PAL Holdings has now assumed the debts of six holding companies in the Tan group that own 82 percent of PAL—Ascot Holdings Inc., Pol Holdings Inc., Cube Factor Holdings Inc., Sierra Holdings and Equities Inc., Network Holdings and Equities Inc. and Maxell Holdings Corp.

TRADE Secretary Peter B. Favila (third from left) inspects a scale model of the Skyway project that will connect Alabang to Balintawak. China Road and Bridge Corp. (CRBC) officials, led by company vice chair and general manager Jianchu Zhang (second from right), met with Favila to reaffirm their commitment to complete the P54-billion Skyway project on time. With them during the inspection are Stradcom Corp. president and CEO Cesar Quiambao and Dell Equipment and Construction Corp. group chair Alexander Asuncion.

Kepco urged to expand in RP

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY IS URGING Korea Electric Power Corp. (Kepco), parent firm of the country's second largest independent power producer, to explore more investment opportunities in the country, particularly in Mindanao and the Panay Islands.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said new Kepco Philippines president Lee Kang Won had reiterated the company's commitment to the Philippine energy market.

Kepco, together with Salcon Power Corp., is putting up a 200-megawatt (MW) coal-fired power plant in Naga, Cebu.

The project will use clean coal technology, which limits the emission of harmful nitrogen oxide and sulfur oxide to environment-friendly levels.

"We appreciate Kepco's commitment to continue their operations in the country and to carry on with their rural electrification project, which involves energizing 200 barangays for this year alone," Lotilla said in a statement yesterday.

Kepco has so far helped provide electricity to 200 barangays nationwide.

With its current portfolio, Kepco accounts for around 15 percent of the country's installed generation capacity and it plans to further expand its operations in the country.

Kepco earlier expressed interest in bidding for the 600-MW Masinloc coal-fired power plant in Zambales and the 600-MW Calaca coal-fired power facility in Batangas.

Lotilla said the power firm was also looking at renewable energy investments in the country.

Kepco's Philippine operations currently include Kepco Philippines Corp., which operates the 650-MW Malaya Thermal Power Plant in Rizal, and KEPCO Ilijan Corp., which operates the 1,200-MW Ilijan Combined Cycle Power Plant in Batangas.

GSIS plans to invest 30% of assets overseas

STATE PENSION FUND GOVERNMENT Service Insurance System wants to invest up to $2.5 billion, or over 30 percent of its assets, overseas from zero currently and plans to hire two global asset managers to oversee two initial blocks of $300 million each.

GSIS president Winston Garcia said record low returns from government debt and a lack of alternative investments locally were forcing the GSIS to broaden its horizons.

"This market is too small already," Garcia said. "We are planning, initially, hopefully before May, to make a tender so that we can select two top world asset managers, starting at $300 million each and ultimately to target $2-$2.5 billion."

Garcia said GSIS, which has over P400 billion or $8.2 billion in assets, would have to liquidate some US dollar-denominated bonds to fund the initial tranche of $600 million.

He added that he was also confident he could sell some key local assets this year and reinvest the proceeds overseas.

The GSIS is one of the biggest investors in the Philippines, with significant stakes in almost all the major listed companies including a 9-percent holding in San Miguel Corp. and a seat on the food and beer giant's board.

The overseas move would be a major step for the GSIS, which was forced to quickly abandon its only other foray abroad—a $10-million investment a decade ago—after a storm of protest from nationalistic politicians.

When he took over the helm at the GSIS in 2001, it was viewed more as a social welfare agency for its 1.5 million members than a pension fund. It had a deficit of around P25 billion. Inefficiency and corruption were rife.

Using technology and a new regime, Garcia weeded out bogus members, clamped down on state employees who defaulted on GSIS loans and ensured premiums were collected. Currently the fund has a surplus of about P18 billion.

Some 10 percent of the fund's portfolio is invested in the Philippine stock exchange (PSE), currently close to 10-year highs and the top performing stock market in Southeast Asia, up nearly 10 percent since the start of the year.

The index finished up nearly one percent at 3,275.19 points on Thursday and Garcia believes it will be over 3,500 by the end of 2007 but lack of liquidity is a problem with the PSE's top 30 firms, on average, offering just one third of their stock for sale.

To encourage companies to offer more, Garcia said the GSIS was thinking of starting its own PSE tracker fund. He also said the GSIS, along with other stakeholders, hoped to list Philippine National Reinsurance Corp. this year and raise P4 billion in capital.

Liquidity is not a problem for the GSIS with a monthly new cash inflow of two billion pesos and even the national government paying back P9 billion in interest repayments and P12.5 billion toward the principal before Christmas—a rare present.

Reuters

GeoGrace in talks with investors

GEOGRACE RESOURCES PHILIPPINES INC. plans to further build up its nickel resource base to take advantage of the rising world market price of the commodity.

In a disclosure to the stock exchange, GeoGrace said it was negotiating with several producers, off-takers, explorers and investors to widen its reach in the nickel market.

The disclosure comes as the Philippine Stock Exchange sought (PSE) more information about GeoGrace's plans after it had sealed two separate agreements to buy nickel mining rights in Zambales.

GeoGrace justified its bullishness in nickel mining, saying the country's deposits of mineral are one of the largest in Southeast Asia.

"Further, nickel prices continue to rise to about $40,000 per metric ton on the London Metals Exchange," the company said.

On Thursday, the company said it had signed another agreement to expand its nickel mining base in Zambales, a few days days after sealing a similar mining deal.

So far, GeoGrace—which is chaired by Jerry C. Angping—has acquired the mining rights of Garnierite Mining Inc. for a 12,957-hectare property and the rights of Saprolite Mining Inc. for a 5,503-ha mining concession, both in Zambales.

GeoGrace, formerly known as Global Equities Inc., is listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange. The deal brings the firm's acquisition of nickel mining concessions to 18,466 ha in the last few days.

It told the stock exchange that it would acquire the rights either through a property-for-share swap or a share-for-share swap with these firms.

"Valuation of the mining tenements will be conducted by a reputable local or international mining consultants," the company said.

Daxim L. Lucas

Global Steel starts exporting to Brazil

GLOBAL STEEL PHILIPPINES INC., THE country's biggest maker of flat steel products, is exporting more than 16,000 metric tons of cold rolled coils (CRC) and hot rolled coils (HRC) to Brazil for the first time, a company executive said in a press statement.

According to Lalit K. Sehgal, Global Steel managing director, some 9,000 metric tons of CRC and 7,000 metric tons of HRC were now being prepared for immediate shipment to Brazil.

"Our exports to various markets worldwide—including Indonesia, Italy, India, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam, Dubai and now Brazil—is proof that Global Steel products are rapidly gaining worldwide acceptance," Sehgal said. He attributed this to the company's quality production standards, competitive pricing and use of state-of-the-art technology.

Commenting on the current market scenario, company spokesperson Sangram Mohanty said steel demand was picking up in the United States, European and Asean countries resulting in improvement in prices to a range of US$20 to US$40 per metric ton.

In light of the steady increase in demand for Global Steel products both in the domestic and overseas markets, the Iligan plant is poised to expand its production capacity this year.

Global Steel presently exports 70 percent of its production, primarily to Asian countries.

Unilab gets patent for new technology

UNITED LABORATORIES INC. RECENTLY obtained the approval of its TasteRite™ patent by the United States Patent and Trademark Office, Unilab president and chief executive officer Carlos Ejercito said.

Ejercito said that TasteRite™ technology was a result of extensive research by PediaTech™, Unilab's research and development (R&D) arm dedicated to developing innovative solutions in childcare.

"This breakthrough technology demonstrates the Filipino scientists' ingenuity in research and development relative to the world's best," Ejercito remarked.

Kennie Dee, Unilab's senior vice president for R&D, said TasteRite™ was a taste-masking system that significantly reduced the inherent bitter taste of some medicines so that children taste the flavor and not the medicine.

"A 2003 survey shows that 77 percent of Filipino mothers agree that the unpleasant taste of some medicines is the major reason for the poor (prescription) compliance among children," Dee said.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Jan. 26, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	7.4	7.4	7.1	7.1	25,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	49	49	47.5	48.5	1,539,800
Bank of the Phil. Islands	70.5	70.5	68.5	69.5	914,300
China Banking Corp.	690	690	685	685	17,130
Citystate Savings Bank	19.75	19.75	19.75	19.75	400
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.5	0.5	0.49	0.5	7,560,000
Equitable Pci Bank Inc.	85	85	85	85	44,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	59	59	57	57	5,745,900
Phil. Bank of Comm. A	50	52	50	52?	900
Philippine National Bank	48	48	47.5	48	34,700
Phil. Savings Bank	49.5	49.5	49	49.5	6,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	36.5	38	34.5	37.5	538,100
Security Bank Corp.	75	75	73	74	45,800
Union Bank of the Phil.	59	60	58	59	26,900
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	4.7	4.8	4.6	4.8	350,000
First Metro Invest. Corp	31.5	31.5	31.5	31.5	1,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1630	1630	1630	1630	380
Pci Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.56	1.6	1.56	1.6	22,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	370	377.5	370	377.5	3,800
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2040	2050	2040	2050	2,380
Ivantage Corp.	1.64	1.64	1.6	1.6	1,949,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
Pnoc Energy Dev. Corp.	4.9	4.9	4.75	4.8	35,213,000
First Gen Corp.	55	55	52.5	53.5	2,594,500
First Phil Hldgs Corp	73	73	71.5	71.5	1,046,500
Manila Electric Co. A	70	70	68	68.5	281,600
Manila Electric Co. B	70	70.5	68.5	69.5	2,033,600
Manila Water Co. Inc.	8.9	9	8.9	9	1,813,000
Petron Corp.	4.15	4.2	4.1	4.2	14,012,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.18	1.2	1.18	1.2	406,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	100,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5	13,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	43	43.5	43	43	97,200
Pancake House Inc.	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3	5,000
Rfm Corp.	1.34	1.36	1.34	1.34	1,504,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	169,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	80,000
San Miguel Corp. A	63.5	63.5	62.5	63	29,600
San Miguel Corp. B	74.5	75	74.5	75	260,600
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.1	2.1	2.04	2.06	913,000
Universal Robina Corp.	18.75	18.75	18.75	18.75	1,486,200
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.3	1.3	1.24	1.28	12,462,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.25	1,458,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	3.25	3.25	3.2	3.2	56,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	8.3	8.4	8.3	8.4	179,000
Republic Cement Corp.	5.3	5.4	5.3	5.4	79,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	4.9	5	4.9	5	2,195,000
Metro Alliance Hldgs B	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	60,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.65	0.67	0.65	0.67	200,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.78	0.78	35,740,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.24	0.3	0.23	0.3	300,140,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	53,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	25,000,000
Ayala Corp.	625	625	600	610	93,700
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	8.8	8.8	8.7	8.7	8,090,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	9	9	9	9	3,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.08	0.085	0.0775	0.085	122,400,000
A. Soriano Corp.	3.1	3.1	3.05	3.1	416,000
Apc Group Inc.	0.37	0.39	0.37	0.38	10,890,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	319,600,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.2	1.24	16,938,000
Atn Holdings Inc.	1.66	1.7	1.66	1.68	83,000
Atn Holdings Inc. B	1.86	1.86	1.8	1.8	9,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp	3.65	3.65	3.6	3.6	324,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10	10	10	10	21,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	2.7	2.95	2.7	2.95	62,912,000
Dmci Holdings Inc.	7	7	6.7	6.9	3,043,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	4.8	4.85	4.75	4.85	3,695,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.29	0.3	0.29	0.29	190,000
House of Investments Inc.	2.7	2.75	2.5	2.75	791,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	12.25	12.25	12	12.25	1,549,100
Medco Holdings	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	130,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	5.2	5.2	5	5.1	1,393,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	1.94	2	1.92	1.94	2,478,000
Pacifica	0.02	0.02	0.019	0.019	700,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	250,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	1,200,000
SM Investments Corp.	387.5	387.5	362.5	370	1,943,310
South China Resources Inc	1.04	1.06	1.04	1.06	4,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.66	1.66	150,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.25	5,040,000
Wellex Industries Inc	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	10,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	16.75	16.75	16	16	12,466,000
Belle Corp.	1.2	1.22	1.18	1.22	6,688,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.96	1.96	1.86	1.94	1,096,000
Cityland Development Corp	1.7	1.76	1.64	1.76	12,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.47	0.47	0.46	0.46	5,170,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.4	3.45	3.35	3.45	2,315,000
C & P Homes Inc.	2	2	1.76	1.86	643,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	1.78	1.78	1.76	1.76	100,000
Cebu Prop. Vent B	1.8	1.8	1.76	1.76	45,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	200,000
Elb Realty Developers Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	910,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.68	0.7	77,810,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.64	1.64	1.64	1.64	200,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.065	0.0675	0.065	0.0675	3,600,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.18	0.215	0.18	0.215	3,940,000
Gotesco Land Inc. B	0.19	0.215	0.19	0.215	1,820,000
Interport Res.	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	10,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.008	0.009	0.008	0.009	3,000,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.3	1.4	42,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.51	0.51	0.49	0.5	3,400,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.79	0.8	4,680,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.027	0.027	0.024	0.024	6,700,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	4,200,000
Megaworld Corp.	2.5	2.55	2.46	2.46	90,879,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	4.8	4.85	4.8	4.8	145,000
Mrc Allied Ind. Inc.	0.33	0.34	0.31	0.32	5,250,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	720,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	16	16	15.25	15.75	3,195,600
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.68	0.68	0.65	0.65	37,260,000
SM Development Corp.	3.35	3.35	3.25	3.3	1,527,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	12	12	11.5	11.75	2,427,500
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.61	0.62	0.61	0.61	200,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	3,000,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp	21.25	21.25	20.75	21	40,700
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.96	1.96	1.9	1.96	3,933,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1295	1295	1285	1290	163,500
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.6	1,619,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2720	2720	2630	2630	111,880
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.28	14,340,000
Imperial Res.	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	10,000,000
Ionics Inc.	2.65	2.65	2.6	2.65	706,000
Ipvg Corp.	3.7	3.7	3.55	3.6	498,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	2,000,000
Ism Communications Corp.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	100,000
Music Semiconductors Corp	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	1,000
Transpacific Broadband	2.34	2.36	2.28	2.28	817,000
Philweb Corp.	0.034	0.034	0.033	0.034	97,600,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.1	4.15	4.1	4.15	121,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	24.25	24.25	23.5	24	607,100
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2.06	2.08	2.06	2.08	124,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	70,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	8,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.61	0.61	0.6	0.61	1,420,000
EDUCATION					
Ipeople Inc.	3.1	3.15	3.1	3.15	125,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Easycall Phils. Inc.-Com	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	5,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	412,000
Paxys Inc.	23	23.25	22.75	23	260,200
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	5.1	5.4	5	5.4	1,051,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	5.1	5.4	5.1	5.4	423,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.011	237,600,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	8.9	8.9	8.8	8.8	562,000
Benguet Corp. A	9.2	9.4	9.1	9.4	76,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.55	2.55	2.5	2.5	53,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.27	0.28	0.26	0.26	4,510,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	3,780,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.026	0.026	0.025	0.026	858,700,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.03	0.03	0.029	0.029	543,700,000
Omico Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.012	0.012	58,900,000
Philex Mining Corp.	4	4	3.85	3.9	5,175,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	15	15.5	15	15.5	183,400
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.68	0.76	0.68	0.75	5,810,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.5	1.56	1.48	1.56	4,140,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.29	0.3	0.29	0.29	12,660,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	80,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	4,000,000
The Philodrill Corp.	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.011	137,600,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	113,200

CURRENCIES

January 26, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.773096	1.000000	48.8850
Japan	Yen	0.006381	0.008254	0.4035
United Kingdom	Pound	1.518438	1.964100	96.0150
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.099044	0.128113	6.2628
Switzerland	Franc	0.619369	0.801154	39.1644
Canada	Dollar	0.653505	0.845309	41.3229
Singapore	Dollar	0.502794	0.650364	31.7930
Australia	Dollar	0.601024	0.777424	38.0044
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.050599	2.652450	129.6650
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.206115	0.266610	13.0332
Brunei	Dollar	0.501164	0.648256	31.6900
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000085	0.000110	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.022672	0.029326	1.4336
Uae	Dirham	0.210504	0.272287	13.3107
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.293500	63.2327
Korea	Won	0.000826	0.001069	0.0523
China	Yuan**	0.099491	0.128692	6.2911
Argentina	Peso	0.249991	0.323363	15.8076
Brazil	Real	0.363468	0.470146	22.9831
Denmark	Kroner	0.134188	0.173572	8.4851
India	Rupee	0.017511	0.022650	1.1072
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.220884	0.285714	13.9671
Mexico	New Peso	0.069957	0.090490	4.4236
New Zealand	Dollar	0.541081	0.699888	34.2140
South Africa	Rand	0.107114	0.138552	6.7731
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023540	0.030449	1.4885

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY Time—Jan. 25, 2007

* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen.

** Asian time closing rate as of Jan. 25, 2007

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Transco bidders assured of stable regulations

ERC says there will be no arbitrary changes in the rules

By Abigail L. Ho

THE ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION assured the three groups bidding for the 25-year National Transmission Corp. (Transco) concession of "transparency and stability" in the country's regulatory environment.

During a recent bidders' forum conducted by the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM), ERC commissioner Rauf Tan said the bidders had nothing to fear, particularly with regard to the regulation of Transco's business.

"We have a transparent and stable regulatory regime, and there will be no arbitrary changes in the rules," he said.

According to PSALM, the recent bidders' forum was specifically held to serve as a venue for discussion and clarification of the three bidders' regulatory concerns.

Representatives from the three consortia that had pre-qualified to bid for the Transco concession attended the forum, PSALM said.

One of the three groups is the consortium of Triratna Holdings Corp. (60 percent), Malaysia's Tenaga Nasional Berhad (5 percent) and Newbridge Asia IV LP (35 percent).

Local firm Triratna is represented by SM Investments vice chair Henry Sy Jr., United Laboratories Corp. chair Joselito Campos Jr. and San Miguel Corp. president Ramon Ang.

The consortium of Citadel Holdings Corp. (60 percent) and Terna SPA (40 percent), represented by Rogelio Singson, as well as the group composed of Monte Oro Grid Resources Corp. (60 percent) and China's State Grid Corp. (40 percent), represented by Walter Brown, have also pre-qualified.

The three bidders were supposed to submit their final financial and technical bids for the Transco concession last Monday, but Finance Secretary Margarito Teves and Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla, PSALM chair and vice chair, respectively, moved the deadline to early next month.

The move was aimed at giving PSALM management and prospective bidders additional time to thresh out some important legal and commercial issues to ensure a sustainable long-term concession contract, which is fair to both the Philippine government and the bidders."

PSALM instead issued the final bid documents on Jan. 22, the supposed deadline date.

"While it is our responsibility to privatize Transco at the soonest, it should not prejudice the quality and integrity of the process. The bigger responsibility is to protect government interest and provide a fair return of investment to the prospective concessionaire," PSALM president Nieves Osorio said.

Mining sector seen finally taking off

NATURAL RESOURCES SECRETARY ANGELO T. Reyes is optimistic that the country's mineral sector will soon be taking off for its long-anticipated boom, which he foresees setting in 2008.

Reyes said the industry's takeoff this year had become apparent with the presence in the country of the world's biggest players in mining, including Anglo-American Plc and Xstrata Copper.

"The major players are now here, and their investments indicate increased confidence of global mining investors in the Philippines." Reyes said. "This marks a significant takeoff for the industry and if this is sustained, we can well anticipate a mining boom starting next year."

The DENR chief's approval of several mining permits in the past several months was considered by investors as an affirmation of the government's resolve to promote mining.

Just last week, Reyes said he had approved the exploration permit of Manila Mining Corp. after being informed that London-based Anglo-American Plc, through its local subsidiary Anglo-American Philippines Exploration Inc., was finalizing a joint venture agreement with MMC for the exploration of the Bayugo Copper Gold Project in Anislagan, Placer in Surigao del Norte.

Anglo-American has committed to initially spend $10 million for exploration works in Bayugo prospect in the next two years. The Bayugo prospect is similar in nature and occurrence with the adjacent Boyungan Copper-Gold Porphyry Deposit that Anglo is exploring under a JV with Philex Mining Corp.

Lack of transparency jacks up infra costs

By Daxim L. Lucas

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY AND INsufficient disclosure in infrastructure projects with private sector participation engender graft and corruption that work against the interests of the taxpaying public.

Thus said a paper prepared by the Economic Policy Research and Advocacy (Epra) group headed by former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Cielito Habito.

"It is clear that adequate transparency and disclosure brings down fiscal and transaction costs for PSP in general, thereby facilitating infrastructure development in the country," according to the report.

"Lack of transparency and disclosure tends to throw sand in the cogs of infrastructure development and undermines the Philippines' national competitiveness," the report said.

The report was presented during a forum organized by Epra and the Action for Economic Reforms urging the passage of a local version of the US Freedom of Information Act.

During the forum, representatives of various nongovernment organizations, the academe, the business and the youth sector asked lawmakers to pass the proposed freedom of information act to "secure the full functioning of [the] right to access information of public concern."

Opaque business deals between the government and the private sector—several of which have been exposed as being onerous—were frequently cited as justification for the swift passage of the bill.

In its paper, Epra said that having sufficient information and disclosure in the development cycle of a certain project ensures that the expectations of stakeholders are realistic, and that the contract and financial terms are "fiscally feasible and attainable."

UP School of Economics professor Renato Recide said that this problem was especially urgent in the field of government infrastructure deals with the private sector which are often classified as big-ticket expenditures.

"Part of the problem is the lack of transparency in the deals," he said in an interview. "This lack of transparency causes distortions in how the resources are allocated."

He added that the secrecy that surrounds many of these infrastructure deals "engenders graft" and "promotes corruption" because they are protected from traditional checks and balances.

The result, he said, is not just overpriced infrastructure projects but the failure to protect the interests of the people over the long term.

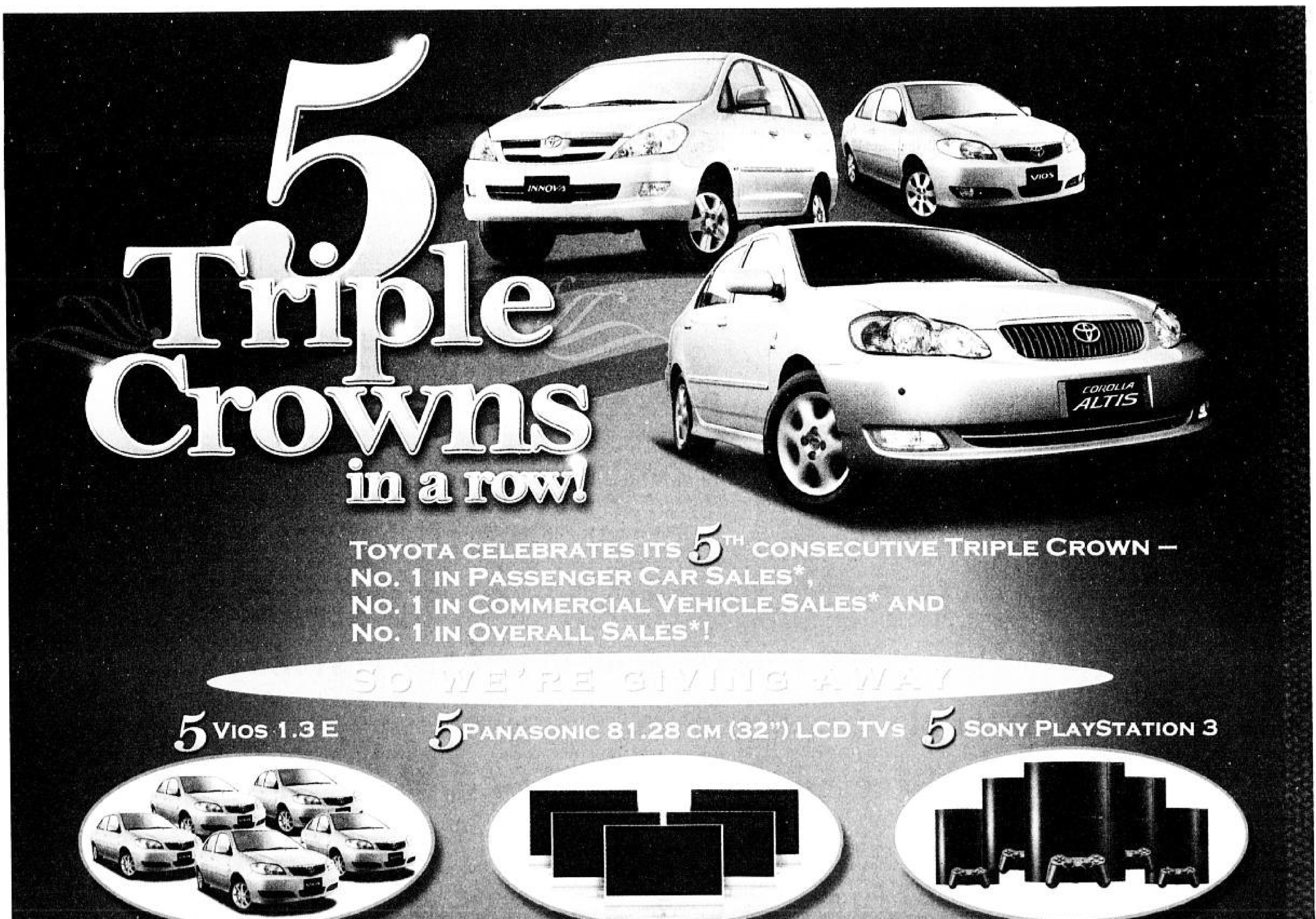
Congress urged to approve RE Act

THE NATIONAL GEOTHERMAL ASSOCIAtion of the Philippines (NGAP) has urged Congress to fast track the approval of the Renewable Energy (RE) Act before it takes its three-month break in February.

The Renewable Energy Bill, which provides for mechanisms and incentives to accelerate the development of renewable energy resources was passed on third reading by the House of Representatives and has been encountering delays in the Senate.

"Given the untapped potential of the country's geothermal resources, the approval of the Renewable Energy bill can help position the Philippines as the world's No.1 producer of geothermal energy," NGAP president Glenn U. Golla said in a press briefing yesterday in Quezon City.

The country was now the second largest producer of geothermal energy for power generation in the world. *Christine A. Gaylican*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Peso's expected strength seen to cut NLEX rates

For MNTC, stronger currency means lower borrowing costs

By Michelle V. Remo

MOTORISTS PASSING THROUGH the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) could look forward to paying lower rates sometime soon should the peso further appreciate and interest rates continue to slow down.

This was according to the Manila North Tollways Corp. (MNTC), which holds the 25-year concession to operate the NLEX. The strengthening of the peso reduces the cost of MNTC's foreign borrowings, the company said.

Rodrigo Franco, executive vice president and chief operating officer of MNTC, yesterday told reporters that the firm is mandated by its concession agreement with the government to adjust toll rates every two years and use economic indicators, such as currency movement, to determine the amount of adjustment.

"There is a formula for computing toll rates," Franco said. "The adjustment is not just one way (meaning, upward). Toll rates could go up or down, depending on factors like improvement of the currency and interest rate."

Last December, Franco said, toll rates imposed by the MNTC on all classes of motor vehicles were slashed by an average of 11 percent. For class 1 vehicles, he said, toll collected from each vehicle under the open system was slashed from P42 to P38.

Franco said the reduction in the toll was made possible by the appreciation of the peso and decline in interest rates.

Last year, the peso breached the 50:$1 to reach the 49-to-a-dollar level on account of huge inflows, mostly remittances from overseas Filipino workers. Interest rates have also fallen, with the benchmark 91-day Treasury bill rate touching the 4-percent mark due to the government's improving fiscal condition.

Franco said MNTC was able to refinance its debts at a much lower cost due to the lower interest rate, while cost of its foreign-denominated debt dropped in peso terms due to the strengthening of the peso.

These economic developments more than offset the drag-down effects on MNTC's revenues by the lower-than-expected volume of traffic in NLEX. Increase in fuel prices is the reason cited for lower-than-expected volume of traffic.

He said that last year, there was a daily average of only 140,000 vehicles passing through the NLEX. This was lower than the 170,000 to 180,000 assumed when negotiations with the government were still ongoing on how to implement the NLEX project.

Should the peso appreciate and interest rate slides further, he said, then the toll could again be reduced, barring any events that would drag down revenue, such as a sharp increase in oil prices.

NLEX is considered to be the main corridor to Central and Northern Luzon. Its first phase, an 84-kilometer stretch from Metro Manila to Pampanga, has already been completed.

Restoring the bamboo trade

By Jerry E. Esplanada

HALF THE PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD share, to some extent, in the trade and subsistence use of bamboo, valued at more than $7 billion a year.

From exports of edible bamboo shoots alone, China and Taiwan earn at least $150 million and $60 million annually. India, on the other hand, makes about $350 million in its bamboo-based incense stick industry.

In most parts of the Philippines, however, bamboo is largely ignored, although it plays such a big role in many local ceremonies, traditions and beliefs.

Not anymore, according to Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) director Edgardo Manda.

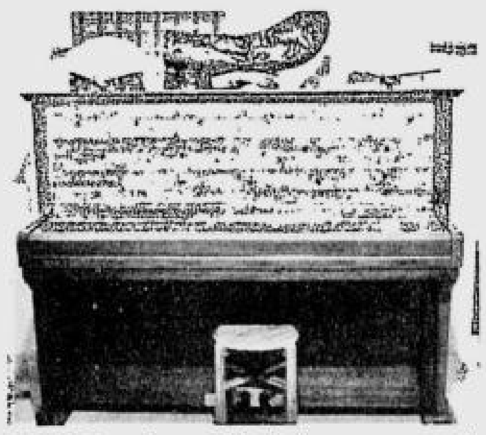
Because "no less than First Gentleman (Jose Miguel) 'Mike' Arroyo is pushing for the development of the local bamboo industry," Manda has told the INQUIRER.

The other tree of life

"A study commissioned by (Arroyo) showed the country, with its ideal tropical climate, can be a major producer and exporter of bamboo—which he prefers to call the other tree of life—and bamboo products," said Manda, also former administrator of the Ninoy Aquino international airport. "Sadly, bamboo development here still lacks the support of both the government and private sectors compared to those in neighboring Asian countries.

Manda pointed out bamboo development here "has been done on a piecemeal basis.

"It is not even considered a major crop as can be seen in National Statistics Office records," he said.



A PIANO made out of the indigenous material.

Now, Manda stressed, is the "right time to step up."

Both Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap and Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes are receptive to the idea, according to Manda.

Strategic plan

Late last year, Manda discussed the program before the LLDA board, led by its chair Cirio Santiago and general manager Casimiro Ynares II.

Manda had proposed the setting up of what he calls a "bamboo development authority or council" that would coordinate the program.

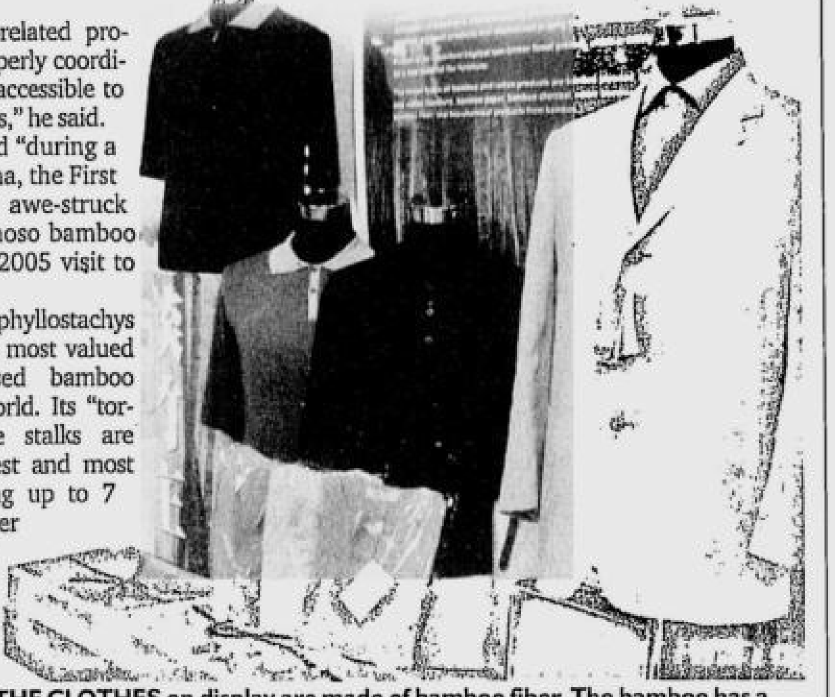
"The body shall, among other functions, formulate a strategic bamboo industry development plan over the next 10 years and ensure that all bamboo-related programs will be properly coordinated and made accessible to all industry players," he said.

A VENDOR in Iloilo City tends to the chairs, beds and tables on sale.

ARNOLD ALMACEN / VISAYAS BUREAU

Manda recalled "during a 2005 visit to China, the First Gentleman was awe-struck by the sight of moso bamboo forests during a 2005 visit to China."

Moso (phyllostachys pubescens) is the most valued commercially used bamboo species in the world. Its "tortoise shell" pole stalks are among the biggest and most beautiful, growing up to 7 inches in diameter and towering up to 80 feet with clusters of relatively small green leaves.



THE CLOTHES on display are made of bamboo fiber. The bamboo has a tensile strength greater than that of steel.

According to Manda, "Arroyo believes what he saw in China could be replicated right here in the Philippines."

Ynares, one of the country's delegates to the just-concluded 11th Living Lakes international conference in Nanchang City, China, thinks bamboo as a reforestation tool in Laguna de Bay watershed areas is a "good idea."

Perfect sense

Laguna and Taal lakes both belong to the Germany-based network which groups around 40 environmentally threatened lakes and wetlands worldwide.

During the recent LLDA board meeting, Manda pointed out that "if coconut is considered the tree of life, bamboo should be treated no less because of its various uses."

"Declaring bamboo as the other tree of life makes perfect sense," Manda asserted.

Bamboo has more than 1,500 documented uses, ranging from food, medicine, toys, paper, construction materials, beer, musical instruments, fuel and light bulbs to aircraft manufacturing.

"Here, the plant plays a key role in many traditional ceremonies. Folk dances like tinikling, singkil and subli revolve around the bamboo. Yet out there in the rural areas, it is largely ignored," said Manda.

During the past six years, the Philippines has been exporting various bamboo products to countries like Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Holland, England, Spain, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Australia and the US and just recently, Israel, Brazil and Venezuela.

At par with the best

"Our bamboo products are at par, if not better with their counterparts worldwide. We have the technology, the land to cultivate the plant, and the labor and manpower to do the work," Manda said.

"What we lack is focus, teamwork and coordination between government and the private sector. That is why, compared to China, Vietnam and other bamboo-producing nations, we remain uncompetitive as far as bamboo production is concerned," he stressed.

Bamboo, which has some 1,250 species, is believed to have made its first appearance about 200 million years ago.

The tree-like woody grass currently grows in both tropical and temperate zones worldwide except Europe and western Asia.

It is perhaps the fastest-growing plant on earth, gaining approximately 75 to 400 mm per day, three times faster than most eucalyptus trees.

Commercially important species usually mature in four to five years, with multiple harvests possible every second year for up to 120 years in some species.

"The bamboo culm (or shoot), the most economically important part of the plant, grows to more than 40 meters in some species in just three to four months. Emerging culms of some species are not only edible and succulent but also nutritious. A 100-gram portion contains 0.5 to 0.77 grams fiber, 81 to 91 mg calcium, 0.5 to 1.7 mg iron, 3.2 to 5.7 mg vitamin C, 4.2 to 6.1 g carbohydrates, 42 to 59 mg phosphorous, 4.1 g glucose, and 17 amino acids, among others," according to a paper furnished the INQUIRER.

Greater than steel

It is estimated that in 35 years a bamboo plant can produce up to 15 kilometers of usable poles of 30 cm in diameter.

Its lightness and and high module of elasticity and rupture make bamboo an ideal material housing in areas prone to natural calamities such as earthquakes and typhoons. The tensile strength of bamboo is greater than that of steel, the LLDA paper also said.

Also, according to Manda, bamboo is "considered a potential and very useful component in intercropping schemes of small farmers."

He proposed converting large areas of marginal grassland in the country into bamboo forests to "increase farmers' incomes and expand their work opportunities."

In 1987, the ERDB started thorough researches on local bamboo production.

The following year, the agency collaborated with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization in launching a bamboo research and development project, which included the establishment of the Philippine Bambusetum near Baguio City. A total of 68 bamboo species, 17 of which were native to the Philippines, were planted at the 4.4-hectare site.

Of the 51 new species, 12 had been introduced to the country earlier while 31 were planted for the first time at the Bambusetum.

The project was operated through an international bamboo species exchange program with several foreign research institutions.

Filipino millers urge BFAD to examine Chinese flour

LOCAL WHEAT FLOUR MILLERS have asked the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD) to check the imported Chinese wheat flour, which they claim will only endanger the country's efforts to boost the health of vitamin-deficient children in the country.

The imported flour allegedly does not comply with the country's fortification law, which requires local products to contain essential nutrients such as vitamin A and iron.

"The flour milling industry is concerned that the violations, if unchecked, could jeopardize the government's fortification program and lay to waste the efforts and initiatives your office has taken to push this worthy program into fruition," Ric M. Pinca, executive director of the Philippine Association of Flour Millers (Pafmil) said in his letter to BFAD Director Leticia Barbara Gutierrez.

Pinca also submitted to BFAD samples of the Chinese flour which he said contained lower levels of vitamin A and iron.

Republic Act 8976, also known as the Fortification Law, mandates that wheat flour should be fortified with Vitamin A and Iron at minimum levels of 3 parts per million (ppm) and 70 ppm respectively.

The maximum levels of fortification are 6.5 ppm for Vitamin A and 105 ppm for Iron. Other products that require fortification are rice, salt and cooking oil.

Pinca said Pafmil had the same imported flour tested by a private analytical laboratory and found these to be severely below the standards set by the government.

One brand of flour only has the equivalent of 48 ppm of iron and 0.253 ppm of vitamin A; while the other brand contains 31 ppm of iron. Vitamin A was not even detected in the second Chinese flour brand, he added.

BFAD, should verify these findings, Pinca said, adding that the products should be withdrawn from the market and further importation be disallowed, if BFAD finds the products to be violating government standards.

The law, according to Pinca, directs the Department of Health through BFAD to monitor the program, formulate the standard operating procedures, and impose sanctions on violators of the program.

All importers, traders and manufacturers of wheat flour are mandated to sell only fortified flour.

Sanctions include product recall or withdrawal from the market, suspension of product registration and fines ranging from P300,000 to P1 million.

DTI helps RP traders in tapping US market

Ronnel W. Domingo

THE TRADE DEPARTMENT SAID it was helping local exporters tap the $34-billion United States specialty food market amid an uptrend in demand for food that are easy to carry, have Asian tastes, and are healthy.

Trade Undersecretary Felicitas Agoncillo-Reyes, who is also executive director of the Center for International Trade Expositions, and Missions or Citem, said 'small and medium-sized food makers were well-positioned to develop niches in the sector.

Reyes said Citem was organizing missions to help the SME exporters to link with established food buyers and focus on the preferences of American consumers in the United States to increase their exports.

"The specialty food retail market size in the US is growing at 15.1%, primarily through supermarkets and mass merchants," she said.

Reyes said condiments were the largest in this food category at about a fifth of the specialty food sales. There are also yogurt and kefir—a cultured, enzyme-rich health food—followed by juices and functional beverages, of which at least a thousand products have been launched in the US alone.

She said market trends in the US include convenient foods with extreme portability and one-handed eating/drinking based on a growing number of consumers who snack while driving; foods with Asian flavors, such as pairings of fiery and cool ingredients, sweet and spicy, tart and salty; and foodstuffs with various health benefits as 70 percent of US adults are trying to eat nutritional foods.

The Citem chief said the agency was organizing the first Philippine participation in the FMI (Food Marketing Institute) Show to be held May 6-8 in Chicago, Illinois.

FMI has 2,300 member companies in more than 60 countries, with the US-based ones operating 26,000 retail food stores and accounting for yearly sales volume of $ 340 billion, or three quarters of all food retail stores in the US.

OFW remittances hit all-time high of $14B

From page B1

Based on earlier forecasts made by the BSP, OFW remittances from all channels would hit the $14-billion mark only in 2007, of which $13.5 billion would be coursed through the banking system.

In 2005, the BSP assumed in its BOP computation that 20 percent of OFW inflows were coming in through the informal channels, defined as unlicensed or unregulated operations such as friends, acquaintances or other travelers.

This so-called leakage in the OFW remittance flows has gone down to 10 percent in 2006 and was expected to further decline to 5 percent this year, based on the BSP's latest estimates.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the local economy and the rest of the world. Any transaction which gives rise to a payment by a Philippine resident like importation or debt servicing is a deficit item in the BOP while any that gives rise to a receipt like borrowing, exporting or inward remittance by OFWs is a surplus item.

An earlier study on the Mexican experience showed that remittances held as deposits in the banking system were two to three times more beneficial than those coursed elsewhere as these formal flows could be channeled to investments. The BSP is promoting the use of formal banking channels as a safer and more productive cash remittance system for millions of Filipinos working abroad.

OFW remittances coursed through the banking system alone breached the $1-billion mark for the seventh straight month in November last year, bringing total cash transfers for the first 11 months to a record-high of $11.44 billion or 17.6 percent higher than a year ago.

Bulk of the OFW remittances continued to come from the United States, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Japan, Canada, Hong Kong, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore and Taiwan.

Through the years, OFW remittances have made the Philippine economy more resilient to shocks that could otherwise affect growth, inflation, external accounts and employment. In terms of employment, for instance, the ratio of jobless Filipinos would have doubled to 20 percent if all OFWs remained in the country instead.

Strong dollar inflows from OFWs as well as foreign portfolio investors last year propped up the peso by nearly 8 percent last year.

Stocks end . . .

From page B1

"Following the consecutive run-up in recent sessions, the market is just ripe for a healthy correction," said Grace Cerdenia of 2TradeAsia.

"There is no other big news other than Wall Street's fall that would warrant a fundamental shift by investors with regard to the country's macroeconomic prospects," she added.

"The decline on Wall Street and its subsequent effect on Asian markets gave impetus for investors, especially for short-term players, to lock profits on recent gains," said Jasper Jimenez of BDO Securities Corp.

Top-traded SM Investments Corp. fell P20 to P370.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. retreated P165 to P2,630, extending the losses of its New York-traded American Depositary Receipts.

Its rival, Globe Telecom Inc., was down P5 to P1,290.

Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. edged down P3 to P57 while Bank of the Philippine Islands fell P2 to P69.50.

Conglomerate Ayala Corp. also fell P15 to P610 while its unit Ayala Land Inc. declined 75 centavos to P16. *AFP*

Economy . . .

From page B1

reenacted budget from 2005, which was about P100 billion lower.

On concerns that higher demand this year might adversely affect inflation, IIF said higher domestic demand would not accelerate inflation because of other compensating factors, primarily the appreciation of the peso.

An appreciation of the peso helps temper increases in consumer prices because the cost of imported goods become cheaper.

IIF said the projected easing of oil prices was likewise seen to offset any inflationary impact of a growth in domestic demand.

The group has made a forecast that the inflation rate would further slow down to below 4 percent this year due to the impact of the peso's movement against the dollar. In December, inflation settled at 4.3 percent, the slowest in almost three years.

Techs lead Asia stocks sell-off, yen down on CPI

Chip makers post weaker earnings; China seen to cool market

SINGAPORE—TECH SHARES YESTERDAY led the sell-off in Asian stock markets as chip makers posted lackluster earnings and the yen slipped after inflation data reinforced doubts that the Bank of Japan will raise interest rates next month.

Worries that China could take further steps to cool its stock market and the economy also hit regional bourses, most of which had posted record highs earlier this week.

"The bubble is bursting," said Alex Tang, research director at Core Pacific-Yamaichi International in Hong Kong. "The market is still overbought despite the correction."

Financial bookmakers in London forecast the FTSE 100 index would open down around 0.3 percent.

Japan's consumer prices rose less than expected, suggesting the world's second-biggest economy is struggling to shake off a decade of deflation.

The data added to speculation the central bank may keep rates at 0.25 percent in February, having surprised markets last week by also leaving them unchanged.

"After the BOJ's decision last week to hold interest rates, it has become more likely that the timing for future rate hikes will be delayed," says Masafumi Yamamoto, currency strategist at Nikkeo Citigroup.

Mixed US housing data and a jump in US bond yields also worried Asian investors, fretting about the economic outlook for the key overseas market for the region's exporters.

"At this moment, it's looking like a rate hike may be a little more likely than a rate cut in the US, and that's not positive for stocks," said Kim Joon-kie, an analyst at SK Securities in Seoul. "That, combined with talk of an impending rate hike in China, is hitting the markets today."

Asian market falls followed declines in the US, where the Dow Jones industrial average retreated from record highs, and the Nasdaq slid on concerns about fourth-quarter earnings.

The dollar climbed to around 121.45 yen by 0620 GMT, inching closer to a four-year high of 121.80 yen touched earlier in the week on the view that interest rates in Japan will lag other major economies for some time to come.

The euro jumped nearly one yen from the day's low to around 157.60 yen, before easing to trade around 156.95 yen.

Tokyo's Nikkei fell 0.2 percent, retreating further from a six-and-a-half-year high touched the previous day.

MSCI's broadest index of shares elsewhere in Asia was down 1.4 percent at 0620 GMT, while a technology sector sub-index slipped 2.2 percent.

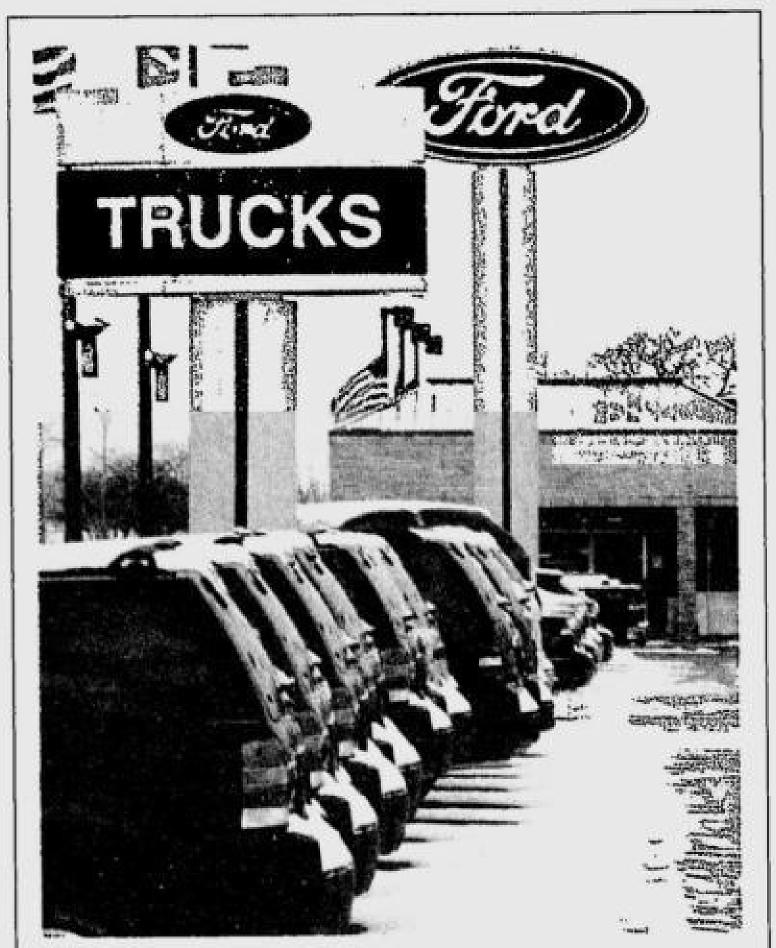
Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 2 percent by midsession, as mainland lenders fell on talk of a possible interest rate rise following higher-than-expected December inflation data.

Seoul's benchmark index fell 0.8 percent, Taiwan stocks fell 1.3 percent. Singapore's Straits Times Index was down 1.2 percent by midsession.

Gold eased a touch to around $646 an ounce, losing ground after hitting a 5-1/2-month high at $654 the previous day.

Japanese government bonds rose after the inflation data, but reversed course later as investors worried about rising bond yields in the US and other markets.

The benchmark 10-year JGB yield rose 2 basis points to 1.680 percent. *Reuters*



SHINY REARS
Ford Escape vehicles are lined up at Royal Oak Ford in Royal Oak, Michigan. Ford Motor Co. lost $5.8 billion in the fourth quarter amid slumping sales and huge restructuring costs, pushing the fabled automaker's deficit for the year to $12.7 billion, the largest in its 103-year history. The annual loss reported Thursday surpassed its previous record of $7.39 billion set in 1992. AP

Oil prices up on Opec threat of production cut

SINGAPORE—OIL PRICES YESTERDAY rebounded in Asian trading after tumbling a day earlier amid re-emerging doubts that Opec members are actually making the production cuts they promised last year.

Light, sweet crude for March delivery rose 24 cents to US$54.47 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange midmorning in Singapore. Crude prices had risen as high as US$55.90 a barrel Thursday before settling at US$54.23 a barrel.

"The drop (of the previous day) was primarily a result of profit-taking after a rather strong price gain," said Victor Shum, energy analyst with Purvin & Gertz in Singapore. "The up and down of the prices reflect the volatility of the market."

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries said it would begin cutting production by 1.2 million barrels a day in November, but some traders speculate members are not complying. The cartel said late last year it planned to cut production by 500,000 barrels a day starting Feb. 1.

Earlier this month, crude fell to US$50 a barrel, but it rose about 10 percent over the past week as cold weather returned to the heating oil-consuming Northeastern United States.

Tanker tracker Oil Movements reported that it expects exports from Opec to rise in mid-February—fanning doubts that had been allayed a day earlier, when ConocoPhillips' chief executive Jim Mulva said the company was firmly instructed to curb output from its Libya and Venezuela operations.

"If you look at trading this week, the market has found some support above the US$50-a-barrel price mark ... It appears to have found a floor due to a number of factors," Shum said, citing continued cold weather in the US and the announcement Tuesday by the US government to double the size of its Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Analysts expect crude-oil futures to stay in a narrow range of US$54 to US$55 a barrel as "traders are likely to adjust positions ahead of the weekend," says Ken Hasegawa, a broker at Himawari CX in Tokyo. *AP*

Bank of China eyes acquisitions abroad

DAVOS, SWITZERLAND—THE Bank of China is looking for acquisitions abroad to strengthen product development at home, but not strategic takeovers in new markets, according to Zhu Min, group executive vice president.

Zhu poured cold water on recent speculation that the mainland's No. 2 lender was exploring buyout candidates in the US consumer finance market, saying he was not aware of any talks with US financial service providers.

"If there are any opportunities abroad, we are open—we're basically looking for products," he told Reuters on Thursday on the sidelines of the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum held in the Alpine ski resort Davos.

Zhu cited Singapore as one possible place where BOC, which raised a combined $13.7 billion through Hong Kong and Shanghai listings last year, could invest in firms that could expand his company's product capacity.

But when asked about talks with US firms, he said: "I'm not aware of anything, no."

Rather, BOC's home market China provided the best opportunities for growth, Zhu said. BOC's 2006 loan growth rate was around 10 percent and could remain at that level into 2007, he said.

"This is really the best market in the world. Why should we leave this market and go into somewhere where we don't know very much, with only a 3 to 5 percent growth rate and a narrower margin?" he asked. "There is huge room for product innovation."

He said BOC still had some way to go before having the right structure to compete on an international scale.

"We have had to build our governance structure, our risk management and clean our balance sheet," he said. "However, even though we have big market capitalization, I don't think we are ready for international competition."

Turning to the economy, Zhu said China was on a more stable footing than a year ago, and that red-hot economic growth was trending lower despite the fact that, earlier in the day, the country posted its fastest rate in more than a decade.

China's economy grew 10.7 percent in 2006, new data showed on Thursday, as investment and exports powered ahead, despite a raft of government curbs to keep the pace of expansion in check.

The world's fourth-largest economy has now grown at double-digit rates for four years in a row. "When we move to year 2007, the macroeconomic foundation is better than the beginning of 2006," he said.

"At that time, we were concerned about a real estate bubble, the auto industry declining in sales, overcapacity in steel and shortages in electricity and oil," he said. "Things now look more balanced than they did a year ago, but obviously there are still concerns because investor motivation is still very strong." *Reuters*

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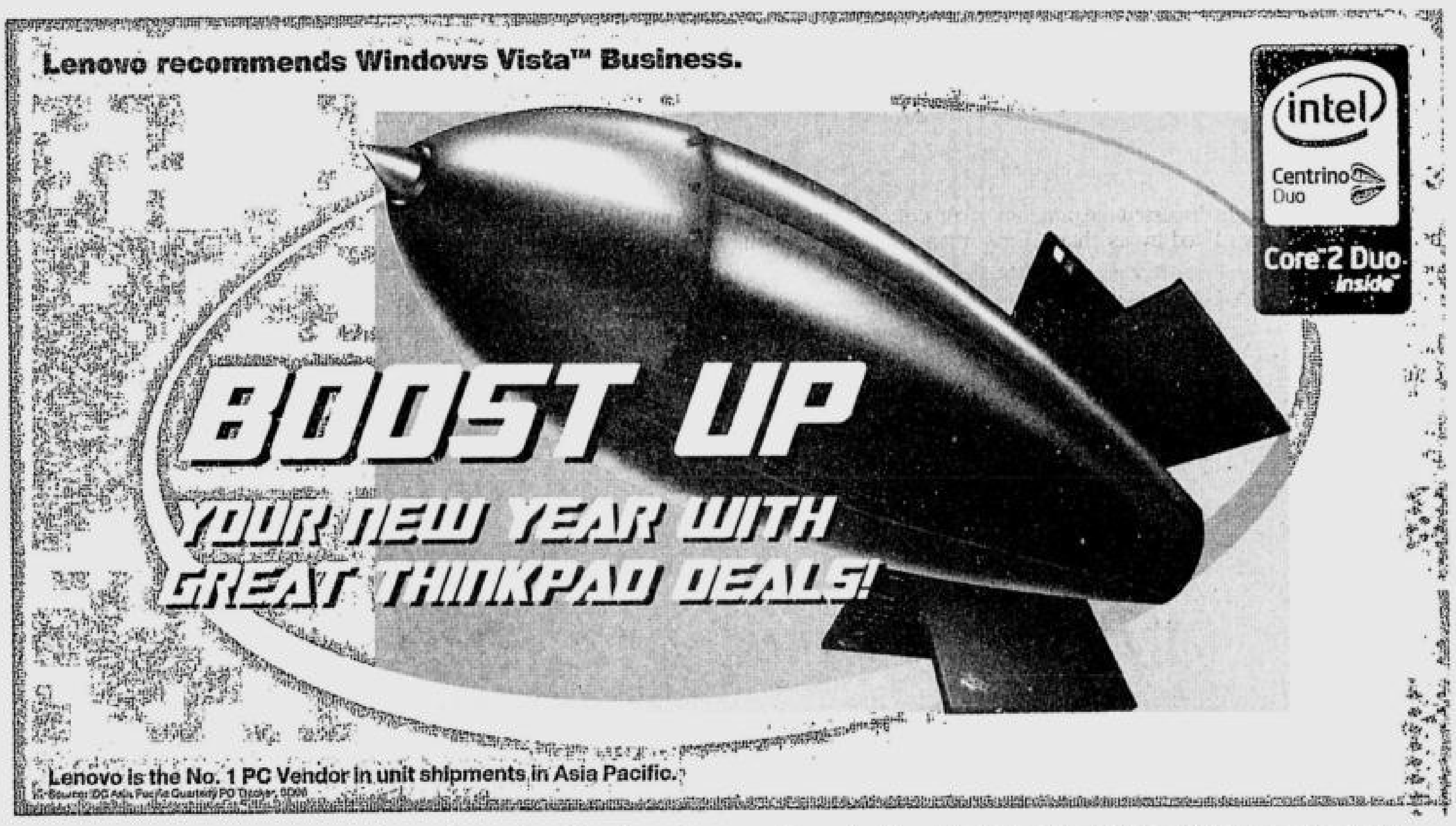

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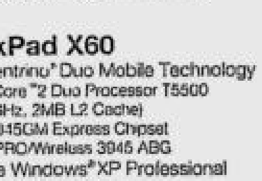

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- Secure "Dangerous Goods" and all forms of freight
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QUALIFICATIONS:
- Female
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- With six (6) years experience in insurance business
- With two years university degree, or to have an associate level professional qualification in insurance/claim related science (such as ACII, HIAA, etc.)
- Very good command of English

D. OFFICER-MEDICAL INSURANCE UNDERWRITING

QUALIFICATIONS:
- Female
- To perform the underwriting activities in his section from the preparation of quotations and policies to the renewal of policies
- Must have been employed in the marine/non-marine insurance
- With experience for at least 6 years, 2 years of which should have been gained in a similar position
- Must be a two years university degree holder or an associate level professional qualification in an insurance/actuarial science (such as ACII, HIAA, etc.)

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NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

In compliance with Section 5 of R.A. 9048, a notice is hereby served to the public that LERIO S. CUBERO has filed with this Office a PETITION FOR CHANGE OF FIRST NAME from ARMANDO to LERIO in the birth certificate of ARMANDO CUBERO who was born on April 10, 1953 in OLIN MAHANUB BAGANGA DAVAO ORIENTAL and whose parents are DELIA SERRA and SEVERINO CUBERO.

Any person adversely affected by said petition may file his written opposition with this office not later than February 06, 2007.

(Sgd.) Atty. Evangeline T. Abatayo
City Civil Registrar

(PDI-Jan. 27 & Feb. 3, 2007)

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We, who all knew and loved her dearly, request everyone to pray for her eternal rest.

Her remains lie in state at the Loyola Memorial Chapel, Sucat, Parañaque.

A 12:00 noon mass will be held at the Loyola Memorial Chapel on Sunday, January 28, 2007.

Interment will follow at 3:00 pm at the Holy Cross Memorial Park, Novaliches, Quezon City.

"GOD HAS YOU IN HIS KEEPING, WE HAVE YOU IN OUR HEARTS."

TO COMMEMORATE THE FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF

FRANCISCA "PAX" VILLANUEVA PAREDES

(Born October 4, 1923 – Died January 27, 2006)

HOLY MASSES WILL BE OFFERED FOR THE ETERNAL REPOSE OF HER SOUL TODAY, JANUARY 27, 2007 AT THE FOLLOWING CHURCHES:

Sta. Clara Parish, Pasay City	all Masses
San Roque Parish Church, Pasay City	6:30 am
San Isidro Parish, Pasay City	6:00 am
Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, Pasay City	7:00 am
San Ildefonso Parish Makati, Makati City	6:00 am
St. John Bosco Parish, Makati City	6:30 am
St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Manila	7:00 am
Our Lady of Remedies Parish, Manila	8:00 am
Shrine of Nuestra Señora de Guia, Manila	8:00 am
Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene, Manila	9:00 am
St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Manila	8:00 am
St. Martin de Porres Parish Church, Parañaque City	6:00 am
Holy Redeemer Parish Church, Quezon City	all Masses
Immaculate Concepcion Parish, Cainta	6:00 am
Parish of Our Lady of Light, Cainta	6:00 am
Sto. Niño Church, Ternate, Cavite	6:00 am
Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Batangas City	7:00 am
Sta. Clara Parish Church, Sto. Tomas, Batangas	6:30 am
St. Francis Church, Melbourne, AUS	12:05 pm
St. John Vianney Church, Spokane, WA, USA	5:00 pm
Holy Cross Catholic Church, Orlando, FL, USA	5:00 pm

Her loving husband NENEC; children JUN and NINI, ALAN and MEL, MITA and MON, ALEX and VANGIE, CECIL and TURRY, BIC and RUDY, BING and BILL, and ALBERT, and grandchildren request relatives and friends to pray for her everlasting glory in heaven.

"...absent
from
the body
to be
present
with the
Lord."

— 2 Corinthians 5:8

In Memoriam

Perla Dorado-Abella

On her 5th death anniversary

A sweet remembrance
A memory, sad and true
Just the love and sweet devotion
Of ones who think of you.

-*Vic*, *Jovi* (†) and *Mercy*, *Grace* and *Vir*, *Aldy*, *Rey* and *Hope*, *Joy* and *Joseph*, *Rico*, *Jordan*, *Julia*, grandchildren, *Rose* and *Fred* and other relatives, Golden Girls, Ligaya, Women for Christ and other friends.

"Goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life and I will live in the house of the Lord forever."

Masses will be offered today at Don Bosco Makati, Shrine of the Sacred Heart, Presentation of the Child Jesus and Resurrection Parishes in BF, St. James and St. Jerome Parishes in Alabang.

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SANTIAGO S. SIMPAS

passed away in the Grace of our Lord on January 25, 2007 at the age of 80.

His loving wife, **Neddie**; children **James**, **June Pearl**, **Jeanne** and **Joyce**; other relatives and friends request the readers to join them in praying for his eternal happiness in heaven.

His body lies in state at Chapel 2, Loyola Memorial Park-Marikina City.

Cremation will take place tomorrow, January 28, 2007 after the 1:00 pm Mass.

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National Capital Region
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NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/

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NPC ALLIANCE CORPORATION 22/F, Citibank Tower, 8741 Paseo de Roxas, Makati City	Mohammad Hemmati	Commercial Director
METROWIDE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING, INC. 105 G/F Park Royale, J. Vargas Ave., Pasig City	John Graham Paterson Craige	Technical Manager (Waste Management)
ACCENTURE, INC. MSE Bldg., Ayala Ave., Makati City	Samuel Oon Poh Chye	Consultant
BROOKSLAKE GARMENT MANUFACTURING CORP. Blk. C, No. 9, Porong Rd., Punturin, Valenzuela City	Surt Yun Iu	Technical Consultant
TECHNOSERVE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, INC. 19/F, Export Bank Plaza, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City	Jun Kagami	Vice President and Construction / IT Manager
GLOBALSKY COMMUNICATION CENTER, INC. 8/F Raffles Center Bldg., Emerald Ave., Ortigas Ctr., Pasig City	James Rick Stinson	Manager U.S. Accounts
SARUKAWA INTERNATIONAL TRADING INC. 1014-B Masbate cor. Luzon St., Sampaloc, Manila	Takashi Sarukawa	Vice President
COASTAL TRAINING PHILIPPINES CORP. U-200-2010 Raffles Bldg., Don Francisco Ortigas Jr. Rd., San Antonio, Pasig City	William Spencer Spindloe	U.K. Sales Division Manager
COMPASS MANA TOURS, CORP. 8/F, Marc 2000 Tower, 1973 Taft Ave., Malate, Manila	Yujung Lee	General Manager
AJAY TRADING CORP. 15B F.B. Javier Cmpd., Caniogan, Pasig City	Simple Bhatia	Personnel Manager
EDUGATE INCORPORATED 320 2C East Tower, PSE Center, Exchange Road, Pasig City	Eun Young Kown	Workforce Analyst
EDUGATE INCORPORATED 320 2C East Tower, PSE Center, Exchange Road, Pasig City	Hyunhee Jung	Call Center/Customer Service Team Leader
NO. 1 ACTIVITY NETWORK SYSTEM (NANS), INC. Unit 22PC Eisenhower Condominium, #7 Eisenhower St., San Juan, Metro Manila	Chunja Kwak (w/o Son)	Marketing Supervisor
WITH MAGIC TRAVEL & TOURS AGENCY, INC. 1505 Echelon Tower, 2021 A. Mabini St., Malate, Manila	Jae Hwan Kwon	Supervisor
NO. 1 ACTIVITY NETWORK SYSTEM (NANS), INC. Unit 22PC Eisenhower Condominium, #7 Eisenhower St., San Juan, Metro Manila	Heungsu Shin	Marketing Manager
YEOHAENG-SKETCH TOURS & TRAVEL INC. Acre Bldg., # 137 Malakas, Central, D4, Quezon City	Su Ock Kang (w/o Lee)	Sales Manager
UNILEVER PHILIPPINES, INC. 1351 U.N. Avenue, Manila	Shahbaz Maqsood Khan	Associate Brand Innovat Manager-Axe
AIRTAC ENTERPRISES PHILIPPINES CO. LTD. CORP. Unit MNO Rainbowland Commercial Center, Km. 18 West Service Road, SSH, Parañaque City	Sarawut Yingbunphadung	Sales Representative
CONVERGYS PHILS. SERVICES CORP. 6796 Ayala St. cor. Salcedo, Makati City	Scott Darnell Flemming	Director, Operations
PARAGON INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMER CARE LIMITED 27/F RCBC Plaza, Yuchengco Tower, Ayala Ave. cor. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City	Shay Maimon	Customer Support Staff
THE THOMSON (PHILIPPINES) CORPORATION 20/F Ayala Life FGU Center, 6811 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Wei Ni	Language Specialist-(Content Fundamentals-Mandarin)
THE THOMSON (PHILIPPINES) CORPORATION 20/F Ayala Life FGU Center, 6811 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Li Zhu	Language Specialist-(Content Securities RTDP/Mandarin)
UWL-KOREA, INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH FOUNDATION PROGRAMME PHILIPPINES INC. 7B Marcelino St., Brgy. Holy Spirit, Quezon City	Hyungoo Kang	Manager
NOVARTIS HEALTHCARE PHILIPPINES, INC. Asian Reinsurance Bldg., Salcedo cor. Gamboa Sts., Legaspi Village, Makati City	Amal Satyawan Kelshikar	Commercial Director
AIRTAC ENTERPRISES PHILIPPINES CO. LTD. CORP. Unit MNO Rainbowland Commercial Center, Km. 18 West Service Road, SSH, Parañaque City	Azrul Hairy Bin Wahab	Sales Representative
UNILEVER PHILIPPINES, INC. 1351 U.N. Avenue, Manila	Fajar Kautsar	Finance Business Partner-Skin/Deos
VERIZON COMMUNICATIONS PHILIPPINES, INC. 17/F Tower 2, The Enterprise Center, 6766 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Chad Evan Faber	Manager
S. MARKETING ASSOCIATES INC. 5064 P. Burgos St., cor. Guanzon St., Poblacion, Makati City	Mingyu Kang	General Manager
ENGLISH11 INC. 1706 Antel Global DJV Ave., Ortigas Center, Pasig City	Seongik Choi (wife of Jo)	Supervisor

If you have any information/objection to the above mentioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
Regional Director

(PDI - Jan. 27, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines

COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS

Manila

EN BANC

IN RE: PETITION FOR ACCREDITATION AS COMELEC'S CITIZEN ARM FOR THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS SET ON MAY 14, 2007.

SPP NO. 06-140

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL FOR RESPONSIBLE VOTING (PPCRV),

Promulgated:
January 25, 2007

Petitioner,

x--------------------------------------x

***Rene V. Sarmiento*, Commissioner:**

RESOLUTION

This is a petition for accreditation filed by PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL FOR RESPONSIBLE VOTING (PPCRV) on November 21, 2006 seeking for nationwide accreditation as citizen's arm of the Commission in connection with the May 14, 2007 national and local elections.

The pertinent portion of the instant petition states:

"1. Petitioner is a *bona fide* national parish-based, non-partisan citizen's movement duly organized by and composed of civic-minded citizens drawn from the various sectors of Philippines *(sic)* society mandated to help from the civic conscience of the Filipino voters and campaign for an honest, meaningful and peaceful elections. It holds its office at Room 301, Piux XII Catholic Center, 1175 United Nations Avenue, Manila, where it may be served with summons and other processes of this Honorable Commission.

xxx xxx xxx

3. The PPCRV has a mass based constituency composed of individuals of voting age and registered voters with operating chapters based in various parishes in provinces, cities and municipalities throughout the country, which carry out all orders, instructions and/or directives issued/promulgated by the PPCRV's National Executive Board (NEB). The Council's membership has grown in number as evidenced by the May 2004 elections where almost 500,000 PPCRV members and volunteers from 2,670 parishes participated in poll watching and election related activities.

4. Over the years, PPCRV has played a major role during and in-between election time by mobilizing its volunteers to man polling precints in the country, helping safeguard the integrity of the ballot, ensuring a meaningful electoral porcess, and campaigning non-stop for voters' education and information on key issues.

5. The PPCRV was formed in October 1991 as a program of the archdiocese of Manila in preparation for the 1992 elections. From then on, Petitioner has grown to become a national movement grounded on faith, values, and authentic democracy. In subsequent elections, petitioner has likewise managed to be accredited as a national citizen's arm. More specifically, Petitioner has been granted due accreditation in the following electoral exercises:

(a) 1993, 1994, 1997 and 2002 Barangay Elections;
(b) 1993 Special Elections for Governor of Bataan;
(c) 1994 Special Elections for Congressman of the Second District of Rizal;
(d) 1992, 1995, 1998, 2001 and 2004 National and Local Elections;
(e) 1996 and 2002 Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Election;
(f) 1997 Recall Elections in Kalookan City;
(g) 1999 Regional Elections in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM);
(h) 1999 October plebiscite on the creation of the City of Novaliches; and
(i) 2000 April Recall Elections for the City Mayor of Pasay City.

6. Petitioner was likewise accredited as citizen's arm in connection with the General Registration and Continuing Registration, and other related activities under Republic Act No. 8189.

7. For the past 15 years, the PPCRV has consistently worked and aspired for honest, clean, credible and peaceful elections. Its unparalleled performance over the years as an accredited national citizen's arm from the above-listed electoral exercises has undoubtedly showed the strength of its mandate and its relevance in electoral exercises. It is with this view that the Petitioner seeks to be accredited anew as a national citizen's arm for purposes of the forthcoming National and Local Election set on May 14, 2007 to perform, among others, voter's education, voter's assistance and poll-watching functions, and such other related activities that the Honorable Commission may direct.

8. Should Petitioner be accredited again as a citizen's arm, Petitioner reiterates and makes of records the following commitments:

(a) That it shall submit itself to direct and immediate control and supervision and comply with the orders of the Commission in the performance of its specific functions and activities provided by law, and such other functions and activities provided by law, and such other functions and activities which the Commission may assign;
(b) It is not supporting any candidate, political party, organizational or coalition of political parties involved on the May 14, 2007 National and Local Elections;
(c) It shall remain strictly non-partisan and impartial during the entire electoral exercise;
(d) It is not supported by and under the influence of any foreign government or any of its agencies or instrumentalities, or of any foreign, whether natural or juridical;
(e) It shall not solicit or receive, direct or indirectly, any contribution or aid of whatever form or nature from any foreign government or any of its agencies or instrumentalities, or from any foreign, whether natural or juridical person;
(f) It does not seek to achieve its objective, goals or programs through violence or other unlawful means, nor aim to propagate any ideology opposed to the principles of a republican and democratic government, and
(g) It will undertake to police its ranks and prevent infiltration by persons or group of persons who may, directly or indirectly, destroy its character of non partisanship and impartially *(sic)*.

On December 7, 2006, the Commission *en banc* issued an Order directing Petitioner to cause the publication of its petition in a newspaper of general circulation. In the same Order, petitioner was notified of the hearing scheduled on December 14, 2006 at 10:00 a.m. at the COMELEC Session Hall, Intramuros, Manila.

During the Hearing, Atty. Howard M. Calleja, counsel for the petitioner, appeared. There was no oppositor. Counsel presented for markings the following exhibits:

"EXH. A"	Manila Standard Today Newspaper dated December 12, 2006.
"EXH. A-1"	Page B6 of Manila Standard Today where the publication can be found.
"EXH. A-2"	Newspaper text of the published petition and order.
"EXH. A-3"	Affidavit of Publication issued by Manila Standard today.
"EXH. A-4"	Newspaper clippings attached to the Affidavit of Publication.
"EXH. A-5"	Name and signature of Mr. Mario R. Policarpio, Jr. Chief Accountant of Manila Standard Today.

Per Order dated December 14, 2006, the Commission admitted Exhibits "A" with its sub-markings. The petitioner was directed to submit its report at the end of every electoral exercises to the Clerk of the Commission to complete its records before said office. Petitioner's manifestation to conduct its own quick count after submission of the clear and specific step by step mechanism relative thereto was also duly noted in said Order.

On January 12, 2007, petitioner submitted its compliance to the above Order, submitting to this Commission its report of the end of every electoral exercise as well as the step by step mechanism for the conduct of a quick count pursuant to its request.

We now rule.

We have gone over the records of the case including the report submitted by petitioner in compliance to the December 14, 2006 Order of this Commission. The petitioner's participation during the past electoral exercises and its commitment towards honest, clean, credible and peaceful elections is duly noted.

After We are satisfied that the petitioner has met the stringent requirements for accreditation as prescribed in Rule 33 of the COMELEC Rules of Procedure, the Commission hereby resolves to **ACCREDIT** the PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL FOR RESPONSIBLE VOTING (PPCRV) as citizen's arm of the Commission nationwide pursuant to Section 2(5) of Article IX (C) of the Constitution and Section 52(k) of the Omnibus Election Code, as amended and other election laws under the Commission's direct and immediate control and supervision, in connection with the national and local elections on May 14, 2007 charged with the following duties, responsibilities and functions:

1. Conduct poll watching functions and precincts, including assistance to voters, and in the canvassing of the votes; and,

2. Assist the Commission in voter's education campaign in every municipality, province and city including highly urbanized cities.

We are however constrained to hold in abeyance our resolution on petitioner's request to conduct a quick/ parallel/ unofficial count since it does not have any track record in conducting the same. Thus, the petitioner is advised to submit proof of its capability to conduct quick/ parallel/ unofficial counting and such other proof that its proposed method is tamper-proof in an election as crucial as the May 14, 2007 exercise which is barely a few months away.

WHEREFORE, premises considered, the instant petition for accreditation is hereby **GRANTED**, subject to the following conditions:

a) That it shall be subject to the direct and immediate control of the Commission and shall comply with all lawful orders of the Commission in the performance of its specific functions and activities as provided in Section 52 (k), Omnibus Election Code, and such other functions and activities which the Commission may assign to it;
b) That it shall be non-partisan and impartial during the election period;
c) That it shall not be under the influence whatsoever of any foreign government corporation, or entity and shall not solicit or receive, directly or indirectly, any contribution or aid of whatever form or nature from any foreign government, corporation or entity, and that neither shall said organization nor any of its members seek to achieve its objectives or programs through violence, or aim to propagate any ideology opposed to the principles of a republican and democratic government;
d) That it shall undertake to police its ranks and prevent infiltration by persons or group of persons who may, directly or indirectly, destroy it character of impartiality;
e) That it shall submit to the Commission a list of its responsible officials and other officers constituting its board and there shall be no changes therein without the approval of the Commission;
f) That it shall make available to the Commission its personnel, facilities, equipment, papers and effects and coordinate its activity with other accredited citizen's arm of the Commission;
g) That it shall submit a weekly written report of its operations during the period of the May 14, 2007 elections; and
h) That this accreditation shall be deemed automatically revoked in case it violates any of the conditions herein set forth.

The Executive Director of this Commission in coordination with the Clerk of Court of the Commission shall implement this Resolution immediately upon its promulgation, furnishing copies thereof to all field officers nationwide including the candidates and the political parties or coalition of political parties.

The Education and Information Department shall cause the publication of this Resolution in two (2) daily newspapers of general circulation.

SO ORDERED.

BENJAMIN S. ABALOS, SR.
Chairman

RESURRECCION Z. BORRA
Commissioner

FLORENTINO A. TUASON, JR.
Commissioner

ROMEO A. BRAWNER
Commissioner

RENE V. SARMIENTO
Commissioner

NICODEMO T. FERRER
Commissioner

x--x

CERTIFICATION

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that based on the records, the conclusions in the foregoing resolution were reached in consultation among the members of the Commission before the case was assigned to the writer of the opinion of the Commission sitting *en banc*.

BENJAMIN S. ABALOS, SR.
Chairman

(PDI - Jan. 27, 2007)

CAGELCO II

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND TO BID

The CAGAYAN II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (CAGELCO II) is inviting all interested bidders to pre-qualify and to bid for the following projects:

1. Supply and Installation of 5 MVA Outdoor Power Transformer and Automatic Voltage Regulator (AVR) for our Casambalangan Sub-Station at Sta. Ana, Cagayan. The Power Transformer must be rated 5 MVA, 3-Phase, HV-67kV / LV-13.8kV, 60Hz, ONAN Cooling, Off-Circuit Tap Changer, Dyn 1 Connection and Drying process shall use Vapour Phase System.
2. Supply and Installation of Automatic Voltage Regulator (AVR), must be rated 167kVA, 1Ø, Nominal Voltage at 7620 Volts, ONAN cooling system, 3 units.
3. Supply of **Pre-Stressed Concrete Pole, Assorted Electric Distribution Line Hardwares and Wires** for rehab/upgrading.

To be qualified, bidder must have fully complied with the following:

1. Accreditation Requirements (for submission to the Accreditation Committee Chairman, Clarence E. Jacinto).
   - a. Company Profile
   - b. Business Registration
   - c. Business Permit
   - d. BIR/VAT Certificate
   - e. Latest Income Tax Return (ITR)
   - f. List of Clients for a period of three (3) years
   - g. Financial Statement
   - h. Compliance with the must technical specifications
2. Must be able to pay P5,000.00 (for this particular bidding only and not refundable) for bid documents during the pre-bid conference.

CAGELCO II reserves the right to reject any/or all bid without any reason, waive any formality therein, accepts proposal most advantageous to the cooperative and assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify any bidder for expenses or losses that may be incurred in the preparation of bid nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

Pre-bid conference and bidding schedules shall be informed to all qualified bidders through fax and mails.

Deadline for submission of requirements – **February 10, 2007.**

(Sgd.) BLANDINA Y. MADAMBA
ISD Manager/PBAC Chairman

Noted by:
(Sgd.) GABRIEL A. TORDESILLAS
General Manager

(PDI – January 27 & 28, 2007)

CULTURAL CENTER OF THE PHILIPPINES
CCP Complex, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City
Wishes to announce its

INVITATION TO BID

"AS IS, WHERE IS"
For the sale of the following:

DESCRIPTION:

1	lot	Unserviceable office equipment, furniture & fixtures
1	lot	Kitchen equipment/utensils
1	lot	Unserviceable fire extinguishers
1	lot	Unserviceable theater equipment, video/audio equip.
1	lot	Mechanical equipment (turbo pack aircon chiller, Air cooled chiller & electric motors
1	lot	Musical instruments

Sealed bids in the prescribed form shall be received until 5:00 PM on February 07, 2007 at Property and Supply Division, Finance and Administrative Building, Cultural Center of the Philippines, Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City and shall then and there be opened for the sale of the item/s bidded.

All bids must be submitted with the proposal bond deposit in the form of cash or manager's check equivalent to 10% percent of the total bid price.

The said items are available for inspection during office hour from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM on February 02-05, 2007 at the CCP Bodega.

Additional information, request for inspection and bid forms may be secured from **STEVE NILO** and **RAMIL AUSTRIA** at the above address or call telephone numbers 551-00-39 and 832-36-66.

The CULTURAL CENTER OF THE PHILIPPINES reserves the right to reject any or all bids, as well as to waive any defect in such bids, and to accept such bids as may be advantageous of the Center.

(Sgd.) TERESA S. RANCES
Chairman, Committee on Disposal

(PDI – Jan. 27, 28 & 29, 2007)

Inquire about the JobMarket package at 897-8808 loc 514.
INQUIRER COMPACT AVAILABLE IN ALL KEY CITIES IN LUZON.

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•SPACE GEAR ₱299
and many more...
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Contact Persons: Emy, Tin', Bhong & Carlo

People, Events & Products

The Columns gives another reason to love Legazpi

MAKATI'S LEGAZPI VILLAGE HIGHlighted its uniqueness as it launched the "Lovin' Legazpi" campaign, a movement inspired by the globally famous "I love New York."

"Lovin' Legazpi" is a celebration of Legazpi Village's rich culture and novel diversions. Being a community teeming with trendy bars and restaurants, shops that offer precious vintage finds, and nooks that serve as sanctuaries for the busy professionals, it is no wonder why Legazpi is the social and creative heart of Makati.

"Legazpi has a unique soul, character and history. For a person who is stuck in the corporate jungle that is the Makati Central Business District, it is a rewarding experience to taste the unique treats of Legazpi," says Community Innovations project development manager Grace Sta. Ana.

The Columns Legazpi Village, the newest development of Community Innovations and a major proponent of the campaign, came up with another reason to love Legazpi through the Lovin' Legazpi Privilege Card.

The privilege card serves as a person's passport to the exclusive benefits of the establishments in Legazpi. Unit-buyers of The Columns Legazpi Village are given the chance to discover the village's novelties and surprises, as they will be recipients of the privilege card.

Each cardholder is entitled to up to 20 percent discount on the Village's dining, recreational and relaxation zones.

Busy professionals who simply need time to unwind and relax can use their cards for spa treatments at the Ban Sabai Spa, or they can indulge in beauty treats at salons like the Bronze Nail Salon, Optima Nail Art and Beauty Center, Cut Loose Salon, Salon de Ken, Nail Spa, or Exclusive Cut Salon. They can also spend their day in silent contemplation at the cozy ambiance of The Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf or the Caffino Expresso Bar.

Cardholders who are craving for non-traditional foods can reward themselves at Legazpi's dining havens: Swagat Restaurant, Café a Go-go, and Old Manila Café.

Discounts from Berenguer-Topacio Furniture, Diane Optical, Floriade Flower Shop, Flowertowne Inc, G-Men Gentlemen Grooming, Indigo Interior Design, Kodak, Lavada Loca, Lienzo de Losgazules, Pancake House Greenbelt and Repertory Philippines also await cardholders.

The Columns Legazpi Village is a 41-storey, two-tower residential condo at the corner of Arnaiz Avenue and Amorsolo St. It is a brainchild of Community Innovations, a wholly owned subsidiary of prime real estate developer Ayala Land.

This residential complex is in close proximity to about 240 office buildings within the Makati Central Business District, and provides easy access to schools, churches, hospitals and embassies.

It is also close to the internationally renowned Greenbelt mall, the country's first Lifestyle Center, where residents of The Columns Legazpi Village can indulge in high-quality, specialty dining, shopping and entertainment treats.

For inquiries on owning a home at The Columns Legazpi Village, call 888-0000, e-mail cii-sales@ayalaland.com.ph or visit www.thecolumnslegazpivillage.com.ph. Model units are available for viewing daily at the 3rd level of Glorietta 3, Ayala Center, from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. (Sunday to Thursday), 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. (Friday and Saturday).

Brother Phils presents Innobella

BROTHER INTERNATIONAL PHILS CORP, A LEADER IN home and business IT peripherals that focuses on the 'customer-first' approach, proudly announces a brand new range of genuine ink and paper called Innobella , derived from the words 'innovation' and 'bella' (Italian word for beautiful).

Based on extensive research and development with tests conducted on over 100 different elements. Brother developed its cutting edge technology to couple its new range of Inkjet Multi Function Centers (MFCs) that will ensure reliable operation and protection of the Brother machine and its print head.

The secret to the success lies in the following enhancements in print head and memory color technology. With Brother's commitment in producing highest quality products that can be enjoyed by everyone, Brother incorporated the amazing 1.5 (picolitre) ink droplet technology, normally found only in high-end inkjet all-in-ones, to comprehensive range of new generation inkjet MFC's.

1.5pl ink droplet technology closes ink droplet gaps and offers the capacity to accurately place these droplets in paper. When used with Innobella Ink & Paper, printouts will have less graininess, greater sharpness and finer definition.

Adding to the mix is Brother's new Memory Color Technology that mimics the way people perceive color in real life as it is ingrained in their memory. Incorporated into each Brother machine is a database of true to life colors. Every color in an image is carefully matched against the database colors to crate the right blend of inks to ensure the most spectacularly realistic printouts.

Innobella Ink and Paper are fade resistant ensuring that prolonged exposure to light and ozone will not cause printouts to fade with time. Innobella Ink also contains carefully selected chemicals to prevent clogging of the print head for smoother operation. This ensures reliability and durability of the Brother machine.

Printing with Innobella Glossy Photo Paper will result in high quality prints with richer colors, sharper images and better definition. This is attributed to the unique chemical formulation coating the paper surface that reduces. ink bleed.

Color Rich, a natural photo color technology, expands the color gamut by broadening the color reproduction area, increasing the varied shades of the different colors and giving more dramatic shades.

Innobella Ink and Photo Paper are available through Brother International Philippines authorized dealers or you may call Brother Helpdesk at 581-9888 or through the trunkline at 581-9800.

PHILIPPINE HEART CENTER
East Avenue, Quezon City
is now accepting applications for
Academic Year 2007

A. FELLOWSHIPS
  I. **3-Year Fellowship Training Program in Adult Cardiology Department**
    - Certificate of Residency Training in Internal Medicine accredited by PCP
    - PCP Diplomate
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    - Have completed Residency Training in Internal Medicine and Fellowship in Cardiology in PCP and PCC accredited institutions
    - PCP Diplomate
    - Submit a research proposal
    - Certificate of Fellowship
  III. **Pulmonary Medicine**
    - PCP Diplomate
  - ❖ Deadline for submission of application is on February 28, 2007
  - ❖ Academic Year 2007 starts on April 1, 2007
  IV. **CV Anesthesiology Division**
    - 3 years Residency in General Anesthesia accredited by PBA (Board eligible)
  V. **Pediatric Cardiovascular Medicine Department**
    - 3 years Residency in General Pediatric accredited by PPS
    - at least passed written examination for Diplomate in Pediatrics
  VI. **Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery Division**
    - 4 years Residency in General Surgery accredited by PCS (Board eligible)
  - ❖ Deadline for submission of application is on January 31, 2007

B. RESIDENCY:
  I. **Nuclear Medicine Division**
    - Academic Graduates – Medical School
    - Medical Board Passers
  - ❖ Deadline for submission of application is on January 31, 2007

General Requirements:
1. Medical Diploma
2. Transcript of Records with the General Weighted Average
3. Itemized Board Rating
4. Three (3) letters of recommendation with at least one letter written by the Training Officer &/or Director of the previous Training Programs (duplicate letters or photocopies signed by different Doctors will not be accepted)
5. Four (4) pcs 2" x 2" colored picture

Please address your communications to:
ARISTIDES G. PANLILIO, M.D.
Department Manager II
The Department of Education, Training and Research
Philippine Heart Center
East Avenue, Quezon City

For further inquiries, please contact Ms. Carmela O. Rivera or Ms. Cleopatra Q. Palencia with Tel. Nos. 925-24-01 locals 3234, 3235, 3236 & 3237 and Telefax 926-96-22 or you can email to oer@phc.gov.ph

(PDI – January 27 & 28, 2007)

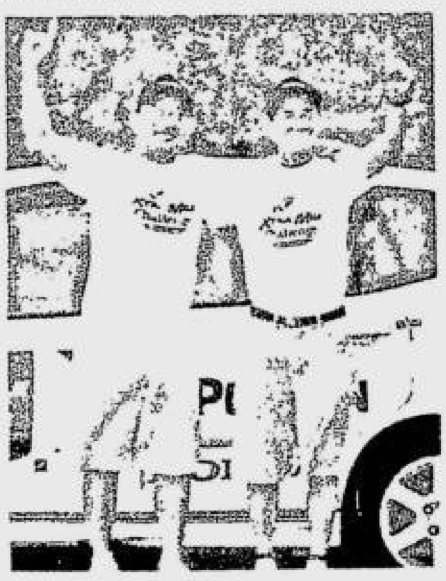
BLUE RIDGE EXECUTIVE VILLAGE GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY

The Blue Ridge Executive Village in Binangonan, Rizal, is the latest addition to Sta. Lucia Realty Development Inc's (SLRDI) long list of property developments. Shown in photo during its groundbreaking ceremony are SLRDI chair and president Exequiel Robles with Citimar Realty's Dr. Charing Santos cutting the ribbon flanked by Megaeast Properties president and CEO Bobby Gonzalez (3rd from right), SLRDI's vice president for sales Marissa Tan (4th from left) together with Binangonan local officials and Megaeast marketing directors. Megaeast Properties is the exclusive marketing company for Blue Ridge Executive Village. For inquiries call 681-7459 or 681-5682.

INDUCTION OF GAMA-PHILIPPINES 2007 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Raul B. Mabanag, LUTCF, Insular Life's district sales manager for its Malate District Sales Office, was recently inducted president of General Agency Managers Association (GAMA) Philippines. Mabanag, together with other newly-elected officers of GAMA Philippines was inducted into office recently by Insurance Commissioner Evangeline Escobillo. During his one-year term, he vows to put into action the GAMA principle of "Growth through Sharing." Photo shows the 2007 GAMA Philippines Board of Directors being inducted into office by Insurance Commissioner Evangeline Escobillo (extreme right). From left, Aida Deveza of Sunlife, Socorro Villamor of Fortune Life, Teresita Ragos, LUTCF of Insular Life, Arabella Borromeo of Sunlife, and GAMA Phil. president Raul B. Mabanag, LUTCF, of Insular Life.

PETRON XTRA MILE CHALLENGE MEDIA EDITION



In the latest incarnation of its trademark marathon fuel economy run, Petron once again reconfirmed the superior performance of its Petron Xtra Unleaded gasoline, with the winning team traveling 1,343.7-kilometers on one full tank. Team Floresca-Perez, driving a Honda Jazz 1.3-CVT, outlasted nine other media teams, finally running out of fuel in Polangui, Albay, after having traversed the entire length of Luzon from Bangui, Ilocos Norte, all the way down to Matnog, Sorsogon, and then back-tracking to Albay. Roman Floresca, assistant business editor of The Philippine Star, and Delfin Perez, assistant business editor of Manila Bulletin, surprised everyone with their first-place finish. While they were not able to break the standing 1,400-km record, both men were pleased with their achievement. At an estimated 31.99 kilometers per liter, the feat was certainly outstanding. The Petron Xtra Mile Challenge Media Edition has once again proven that with Petron Xtra Unleaded's superior formulation, coupled with fuel-efficient driving habits and a well-tuned car, everyday motorists can definitely go the extra mile for a great fuel success experience.

Letran in Bataan celebrates foundation Anniversary

COLEGIO DE SAN JUAN DE LETRAN IN ABUCAY, BATAAN CELEBRATES ITS 1ST FOUNDATION ANniversary on Jan. 30 to Feb. 2. This year's event is another milestone in their history since this is the first time that the school is having their foundation celebration. The four-day affair will start with a community mass on the 30th, to be followed by festive activities like the motorcade, convocation, field demonstration, opening of booths and exhibits and the car stickering project. The 2nd day is dedicated to academic-related activities that include the slogan-making, essay writing, debate and declamation. In the afternoon, there will be a symposium on the life and works of San Miguel de Aozaraza, the Dominican saint who lived and worked in Bataan. Sports events, parlor games and the Mr And Ms Letran Personality are lined - up on the 3rd day. On the 4th and final day of the celebration, parents and other members of the Letran community will have a recollection in the morning. Bingo Socials will be in the afternoon while the Liem the Musicale production will be in evening depicting the life and works of San Vicente Liem de la Paz, the Colegio's foremost alumnus saint.

SPUM College and HS Alumni

IT'S A SPA-RTY! COME CELEBRATE A SPECIAL DAY OF WINE, MUSIC, GOOD FOOD AND GOOD friends. Be there at St. Paul University Manila's A Magical Harvest - a Grand Homecoming to toast the Paulinian spirit! Be a part of this magical gathering on Jan. 28, that brings together a melange of free flowing activities like wine tasting, spa sessions, beauty and wellness, fashion, lots of prizes and more. Register now. Get a chance to win tickets for two to Hong Kong or Boracay. For inquiries, call Patty Benitez-Villa at 824-3687 or text 0917-866-5988. Or call Veron of the SPMAFI Office at 524-5687 loc. 229 and 523-4259. A Magical Harvest is brought to you by SPCM High School '82 Silver Jubilarians

Ampalaya: Getting back into the game

By Charles E. Buban

AMPALAYA is both a nutritious vegetable and a traditionally trusted medicinal herb.

A BOOMING ampalaya-based product could give RP farmers profitable source of income.

IT WAS EIGHT YEARS ago when Charantia, a product by Herbcare Corp., became the country's first ampalaya tea to be registered with the Bureau of Food and Drugs.

Within the next two years, the tea made from 100 percent dried fruits of ampalaya (seeds not included) became so popular that other brands joined in, further endearing the bitter herb to its targeted market composed mostly of diabetics.

According to Lito Abelarde, president of Herbcare Corp. and also the Chamber of Herbal Industries of the Philippines—an association of local manufacturers of herbal products—the ampalaya food supplement industry at the time.is registering an annual sales of at least P700 million, accounting for 26 percent of the market for diabetes sufferers (total market for insulin and other hypoglycemic oral products in the Philippines is P1.9 billion).

Abelarde added that even on the export scene, the ampalaya tea has become the banner herbal product of the Philippines, thus, paving the way for establishing the country as a reliable source for this product.

Halted

But the industry's growth slowed down considerably when in June 2003, the Department of Health reclassified ampalaya from scientifically validated to folklorically validated medicinal plant.

It was also a complete turnaround from a 1995 DOH circular, which listed ampalaya as among the 10 herbs that had been scientifically validated and which the department had been promoting as adjuncts to treatments of various diseases.

"The announcement caused confusion and it was uphill battle after that for the chamber which stepped to the forefront to reconvince authorities and the public about ampalaya as one of the medicinal plants that is scientifically validated for use as alternative medicine, and that ampalaya has a long history of use not only as a food but also as a hypoglycemic agent (one that lowers blood glucose levels)," Abelarde said.

He added that the chamber was still careful in its pronouncement, reiterating that its products should only be used as dietary adjunct in the treatment of type-2 diabetes and that their diabetic buyers should still continue taking their doctor-prescribed medication.

> The reclassification should confirm the product's usefulness in the prevention and control of diabetes

"Reconvincing the authorities as well as the public will take time," Abelarde admitted. "However, I strongly believe that things would change for the better soon, especially in the light of the Bureau of Food and Drugs' recent announcement regarding the Charantia," he said.

Reclassified

Recently, the BFAD reclassified Charantia from just mere food supplement to food for special dietary use (of diabetics), the first product in its category to be afforded such classification.

"This reclassification by the Department of Health's key regulatory agency should confirm the tea's dietary benefits in controlling the blood sugar of diabetics," Abelarde said.

He informed that last August Herbcare sent to BFAD a reclassification request and included several publications as basis: 2001 issue of Philippine Journal of Internal Medicine that featured Doctors Reynaldo Rosales and Ricardo Fernando's clinical trial involving Charantia ampalaya tea; 2004 review article of ampalaya's potency by Dr. William Torres, whom he presented before the 2004 World Congress on Anti-Aging Medicine in Las Vegas; and a 1996 issue of Phytomedicine (a publication providing coverage and analysis of the field of the pharmaceuticals industry) that featured the review article of Doctors A. Raman and C. Lau, from the Pharmacognosy Laboratories, Department of Pharmacy at the Kings College in London, United Kingdom, titled "Anti-diabetic properties and phytochemistry of Momordica charantia L., a review of over 150 preclinical and clinical studies on Ampalaya's anti-diabetes properties and phytochemistry.

Welcomed

The move was also welcomed by Dr. Guia Abad, past president of the Association of Municipal Health Officers of the Philippines (Amhop), saying that the reclassification should confirm the product's usefulness in the prevention and control of diabetes.

Amhop is a national medical organization that runs the country's public health centers, and has been recommending Charantia to their diabetic patients since 2001.

"Perhaps, this recent BFAD announcement on Charantia will pave the way for other similar products to be reclassified as such. But more than such reclassification, I hope that the scientific community would take notice of this development and plan for more trials that would finally end doubts about ampalaya's efficacy against diabetes," Abelarde said.

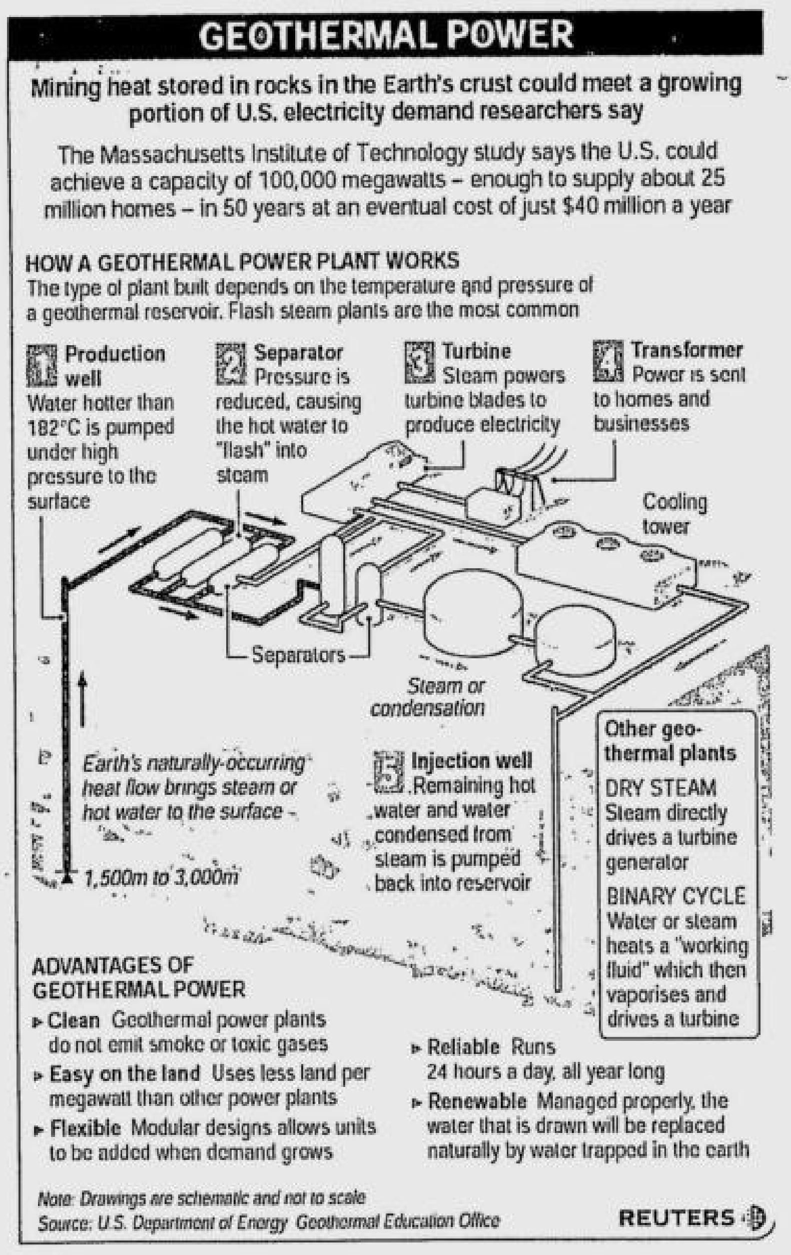
But on the other hand, he also believes products like ampalaya tea should take a different path that new pharmaceutical drugs are now undergoing for it to be approved for use in the general population.

Said Abelarde: "There should be another way—other than a four-phase clinical trial, which is extremely long, tedious and very expensive to undertake—that could establish products like ampalaya tea as potent yet safe option in controlling diabetes. This is certainly one of the missions that the chamber is looking into."

GEOTHERMAL POWER

Mining heat stored in rocks in the Earth's crust could meet a growing portion of U.S. electricity demand researchers say

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology study says the U.S. could achieve a capacity of 100,000 megawatts – enough to supply about 25 million homes – in 50 years at an eventual cost of just $40 million a year


HOW A GEOTHERMAL POWER PLANT WORKS
The type of plant built depends on the temperature and pressure of a geothermal reservoir. Flash steam plants are the most common
1 Production well Water hotter than 182°C is pumped under high pressure to the surface
2 Separator Pressure is reduced, causing the hot water to "flash" into steam
3 Turbine Steam powers turbine blades to produce electricity
4 Transformer Power is sent to homes and businesses
Cooling tower
Separators
Steam or condensation
Earth's naturally-occurring heat flow brings steam or hot water to the surface
1,500m to 3,000m
5 Injection well Remaining hot water and water condensed from steam is pumped back into reservoir
Other geothermal plants
DRY STEAM Steam directly drives a turbine generator
BINARY CYCLE Water or steam heats a "working fluid" which then vaporises and drives a turbine

ADVANTAGES OF GEOTHERMAL POWER

- **Clean** Geothermal power plants do not emit smoke or toxic gases
- **Easy on the land** Uses less land per megawatt than other power plants
- **Flexible** Modular designs allows units to be added when demand grows
- **Reliable** Runs 24 hours a day, all year long
- **Renewable** Managed properly, the water that is drawn will be replaced naturally by water trapped in the earth

Note: Drawings are schematic and not to scale
Source: U.S. Department of Energy Geothermal Education Office

REUTERS

China observations

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua

LAST YEAR, RYAN SYLAM LIwanag, my former student, who excels in math, asked me for advice on how to handle technical training for a company in China. Since the employees were not used to the English language, I advised Ryan to use simple English words and illustrations. Happily, Ryan reported that the training was successful. He also sent me some observations about his experiences, which I felt were not only interesting, but instructive as well.

China is the rising power in the region, and probably the world. One reason for this is the country's stress on math and science, which contributes to the quality of its workers. Here is a firsthand account, by Ryan Liwanag.

Thirst for learning

At first, the Chinese personnel were not used to how fast I spoke. But surprisingly, when I made an effort to speak faster every week, they eventually got used to it. I sensed their genuine thirst for learning, an attitude I rarely observe here in Manila. Their level of English proficiency was not comparable to Ateneo graduates, but they managed to conduct basic conversations with me. However, a meaningful chat on politics, culture, and of course, mathematics, required the assistance of Microsoft Word's Chinese thesaurus or PowerWord2000.

Good English skills are required for our work because all our documents are in English. Thus, all employees in the center are required to have passing marks in CET4, an exam they take right after two years of university work. This ensures that the employee is skilled enough to communicate with native English speakers. My trainees wanted to learn more English from me, so I ended up speaking English most of the time. They were so eager to learn that I decided not to speak Chinese at all.

Proficiency in math

The employees were exceptionally well-versed in math. My trainees lived up to the Chinese reputation in this subject. I asked them to write a function that would give the nth term of the sequence {1, 2, ½, 1/3, 2/2, 3, 4, 3/2, 2/3,...} which was a method for enumerating all positive rational numbers. I had given this same problem to some trainees in Manila, and it took them around two hours. My Chinese trainees cracked it in a matter of minutes! Their keen sense of pattern was impressive. Based on my conversations with them, I sensed that the Computer Science curriculum of Chinese universities was riddled with very many math courses. Their courses outnumbered the math courses I took at the Ateneo. The depth of their material was also certainly not trivial. Their books always included adequate proofs for computational theorems. When I browsed through their books, I became as giddy as a college nerd.

Their good theoretical training might have contributed to the way they conducted themselves during training. I was often asked questions starting with "Why?" The trainees were so eager to learn the theories and explanations behind every concept I threw at them. I felt like an orange, being squeezed to a pulp. But I enjoyed our discussions (of course, with the assistance of PowerWord).

Astounding economy

The promise of progress is being realized in China at this moment. The Chinese economy is growing at an astounding rate (10 percent every quarter). My trainees shared that the most in-demand university degree in the Northeast is Mechanical Engineering due to the proliferation of manufacturing plants in the region. More opportunities for these engineers will come as the development of the northeastern provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang is a top priority of the government. The country is trying to revive the old manufacturing industries of this once-great Manchuria.

China is becoming very powerful, and I am thankful to have had the chance to work with some of the people. I was there for more than month, and I have made good friends. As for the Philippines, though, we should be prepared for China's emergence. As for me, I brush up on my Mandarin.

Most important equation

My colleague, Felix Muga, sends us this reminder from his pastor. The best mathematical equation I have ever seen is: 1 Cross +3 Nails = 4given. God's love is infinite.

* * *

Queena N. Lee-Chua is a professor of mathematics and psychology at Ateneo de Manila University. Contact her at blessbook@yahoo.com.

Doc Willie and Liza

By Rafael R. Castillo, MD

MEDICAL FILES

AT A TIME WHEN THE MORALE of the medical community seems to be at its lowest, with doctors shifting to nursing as a more lucrative career path, hospitals in the provinces closing down, and a malpractice law looming in the horizon, the Movement of Idealistic and Nationalistic Doctors (MIND) comes as a soothing balm to beleaguered young doctors.

Our young doctors are inevitably confronted with a future of uncertainty, dictated more by lucky breaks rather than merit or skills. As a neophyte practitioner waits patiently in his new clinic with patients coming far in between, he can't help but wrestle in his mind with the inevitable questions of whether or not to jump ship and try one's luck abroad, or abandon one's Hippocratic oath and pledge anew to the Nightingale oath.

Refuge for young docs

The MIND offers a refuge for these young doctors. It is an advocacy group to support and guide young and even not-so-young doctors. It helps them find a path through the narrow straits they find themselves in. "Ever since MIND started, I have had the pleasure of talking and planning the lives of dozens of students and young doctors. I count it a great privilege and opportunity to help them find their niche," says Dr. Willie Ong, who cofounded MIND together with wife Liza and Dr. Philip Cruz, a pediatrician at the UP-PGH Medical Center.

For several years now, Willie and Liza have been invited by various medical colleges and organizations nationwide to speak to their students or members. They even give their cell phones and e-mail addresses, so they can be in constant touch with those who wish to consult them about their studies and their career. The couple guides these medical students and young doctors so they may find their purpose in life, and live according to their purpose. They encourage them to do what they enjoy doing regardless of monetary considerations. And judging from the overwhelming response in terms of attendance during the annual conventions of MIND, I'm sure they have touched the lives of countless aspiring doctors who may have had second thoughts about their chosen career.

Louis Mar, now on his junior year at the UP College of Medicine, has written a book and published it; thanks to the encouragement and guidance of Willie and Liza. The book on AIDS awareness and gay life realities, is now available at the National Book Store. Incidentally, Willie and Liza are the coauthors of at least six medical textbooks, the most popular of which is the Medical Blue Book, considered the must-have "peripheral brain" of medical residents during training.

TV shows

Willie and Liza have also ventured into television so they can reach more people they can help. They now have two television programs. One show is "Doc Willie and Liza" which runs on RJTV every Friday at 5:30-7:00 p.m. with replays on Saturdays at 8-9 a.m. The other, "Ang Makabayang Doktor," shown on NBN channel 4, is more of a reality show wherein Willie and Liza visit an indigent family with urgent medical problems and treat them. Services, medicines, all for free.

Willie and Liza really take pains in preparing for their TV programs. And their goal is not really to become famous TV personalities. "I have one simple goal," Willie says. "... and that is, to help one to two persons per show." Judging from the many callers his RJTV show has been getting, they are touching the lives of a growing legion of viewers who are now more empowered with the health information they get from the show. "That alone is worth all the efforts and preparations we do for the show," Willie and Liza say.

Biblical secret of success

Once, a consultant asked Willie and Liza why they're doing all these, and for free. And Willie simply answered: "We believe in the Biblical secret of success which says, 'Give first with no thought (of reward) in return.' God will provide you with all the help and blessings you need—to help more people, to alter their lives for the better. And if we help our young doctors (who are) the future of our country, are we not saving the lives of thousands of Filipino lives as well?"

If we hear answers like this from young doctors like Willie and Liza, we feel secure about the future of health care in our country.

Arthritis sufferers in RP to exceed 2.6M

By Tessa R. Salazar

THE DEBILITATING, AGonizing pain of arthritis and rheumatism is such that sufferers sometimes prefer death over a lifetime of torment. Couple this with the disturbing trend that the number of arthritis and soft tissue rheumatism sufferers is predicted to increase, and experts are warning Filipinos to take a closer look at themselves and examine their risks of developing the disease.

The Philippine Rheumatology Association warned that the number of arthritis sufferers and those with soft tissue rheumatism, which now stands at 2.6 million adult Filipinos, will rise as the average life span of Filipinos increases.

Not the only causes

Dr. Evelyn Osio-Salido, president of the association, said that contrary to the myth, aging and a high purine diet are not the only causes of arthritis, and may even play no role in some cases.

Arthritis is commonly defined as a disease of the joints, while rheumatism is differentiated from the former as a disease of the structures around the joints, such as muscles, tendons and ligaments.

There are a hundred types of arthritis, and its onset can be due to heredity, trauma, weight, abnormal antibodies that attack the joints, medicines or an infection. Salido added that high alcohol intake, food binges and a poor diet can precipitate gout (also called metabolic arthritis). Gouty arthritis can lead to kidney failure. A rheumatoid arthritis sufferer's life span is shortened by at least five years.

Rheumatism, on the other hand, is usually caused by minor trauma that is encountered in regular daily activities. Salido said examples of rheumatism include a 20-year-old working in an air-conditioned environment such as a call center experiencing back pain from her muscles, leading to spasm, or an 18-year-old student who feels pain and discomfort in the neck area from carrying a heavy backpack.

Salido also cited a 30-year-old executive who experiences pain in her shoulders from carrying heavy designer bags, and a 15-year-old who feels pain in the thumbs and fingers due to constant texting. Many cases point to a common cause of repetitive motions, and wrong hand positions and improper posture while on the computer.

Weight and posture

Those who are aware that they have a family history of arthritis are advised to maintain near ideal weight, as well as good posture.

Dr. Ester Gonzales Penserga, former president of PRA, added that they should also avoid alcohol, especially beer, and even red wine.

They should also avoid food binges high in uric acid such as small fishes (dilis, tawilis, tinapa, tamban, alamang, patis, bagoong, etc).

Mushrooms, monggo beans, sitaw, mani, patani, eggplant and shellfish can be taken in moderation.

Dr. Lyndon Llamado, a fellow of PRA, said everything should be taken in moderation.

Gout, he described, is one of the most painful types of arthritis. In extreme cases, a person suffering from gout cannot even stand to let a blanket touch the affected area.

Exercise

Penserga urged people to exercise to prevent or at least delay the onset of arthritis. "Exercise tones muscles around joints. Even if arthritis is inherited, toned and healthy muscles help maintain motion and lessen the pain (for sufferers)."

"Stop smoking," she added. "Rheumatoid arthritis and Buerger's disease are associated with smoking."

Individuals are urged to consult a rheumatologist early if they have a family history of arthritis. "Seek medical advice first before resorting to herbal medicines since many of these carry side effects," Penserga advised.

Salido said many forms of alternative treatments are not backed by good scientific evidence. "The same rigor that we use in our search for scientific evidence that medicines work in should be applied to supplements and natural products," she added.

Salido noted that natural supplements can also affect how other drugs work. She cited ginger, which has been found to decrease blood clotting and increase the risk of bleeding.

Dr. Michael Tee of the PRA also said the early signs of arthritis and rheumatism should not be ignored, as eventually the medical expense of treating the diseases could run up to as much as P300,000 a year.

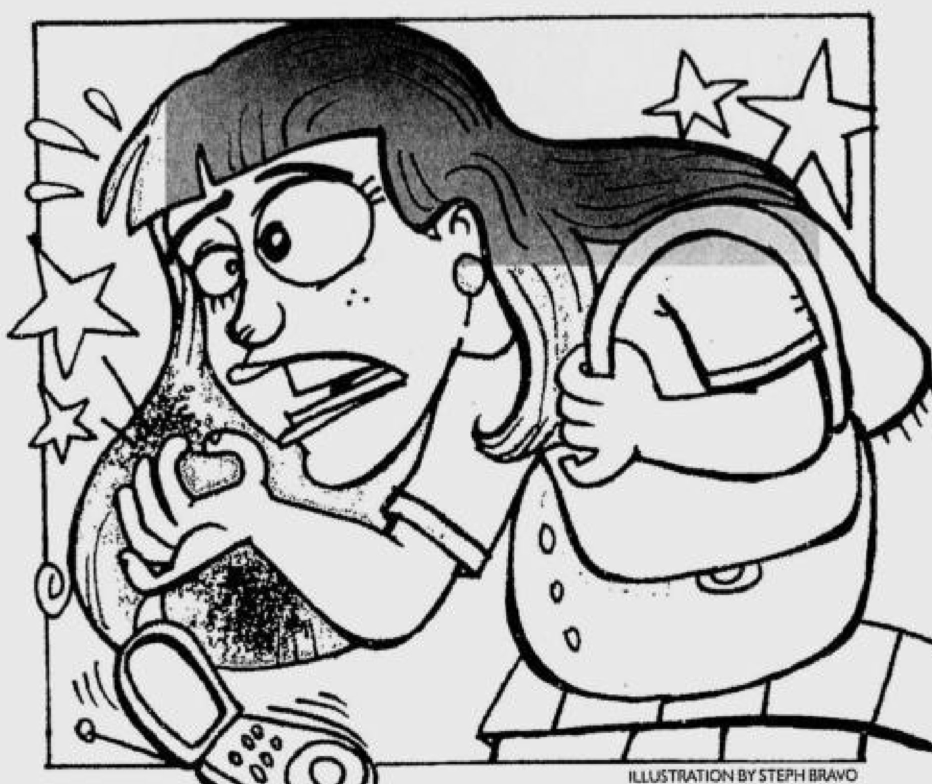


ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

Smoking may trigger rheumatoid arthritis, lupus

By Tessa R. Salazar

SMOKING MAY TRIGGER ARTHRITIS. Dr. Michael Tee of the Philippine Rheumatology Association revealed during a recent Philippine College of Physicians forum that smoking may trigger death of cells in the lungs.

Different studies on arthritis done over several years show a strong association between smoking and rheumatoid arthritis and systemic lupus erythematosus, particularly for people with strong genetic predisposition for these two diseases.

Effects of smoking

A group of Swedish rheumatologists reveal the effects of smoking on the development of rheumatoid arthritis and systemic lupus erythematosus in the January 2007 issue of Current Opinions in Rheumatology.

"We would like to warn the public that smoking can trigger rheumatoid arthritis and systemic lupus erythematosus for those who already have predisposition to these two types of diseases. Arthritis may occur earlier for them," says Dr. Evelyn Osio-Salido, PRA president.

Rheumatoid arthritis affects the different joints of the body, particularly the hands, wrists and feet. This is characterized by pain, swelling and stiffness of the joints that is more pronounced in the morning.

The PRA quoted the 2003 National Nutrition and Health Survey estimates that showed 2.4 million adult Filipinos have rheumatoid arthritis.

Systemic lupus erythematosus is a condition where the body rejects itself, resulting in full-blown inflammation that may potentially affect the entire body.

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PROPERTY

Editor **Cesar D. Mangawang**

AMONG HIGHEST IN ASIA

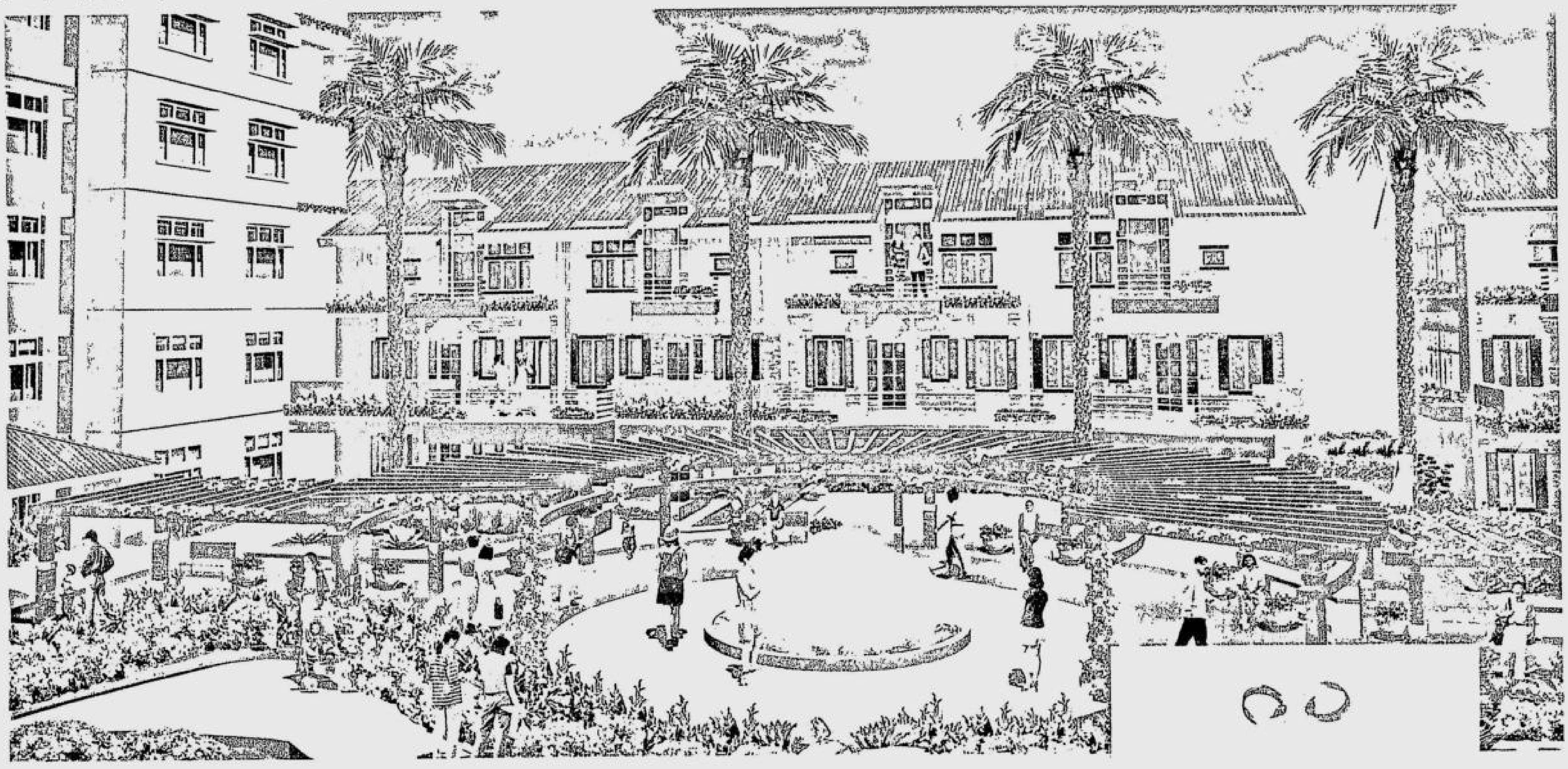
RP property values can increase 35%

By Tessa R. Salazar

A SENIOR ECONOMIST of the Global Property Guide, advised Philippine property buyers to consider the long term whenever they're making their choices. And by the long term, it's envisioning where they want to live or work, or retire 10 to 20 years from now.

Prince Cruz pointed out to the INQUIRER that most developers will sell lands and plots with a "nature view." However, the area might be "green" for now simply because there are no other houses.

RP/ B2-2



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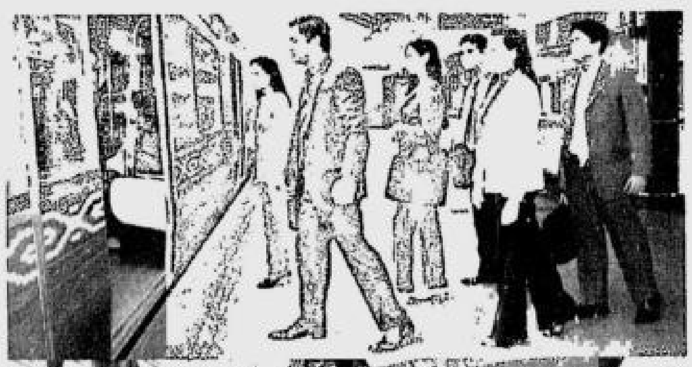

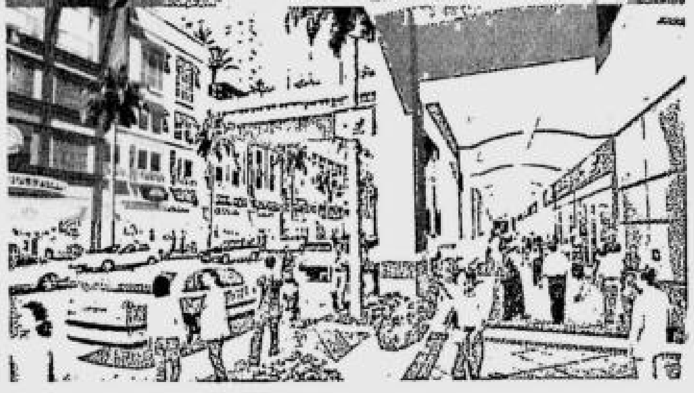

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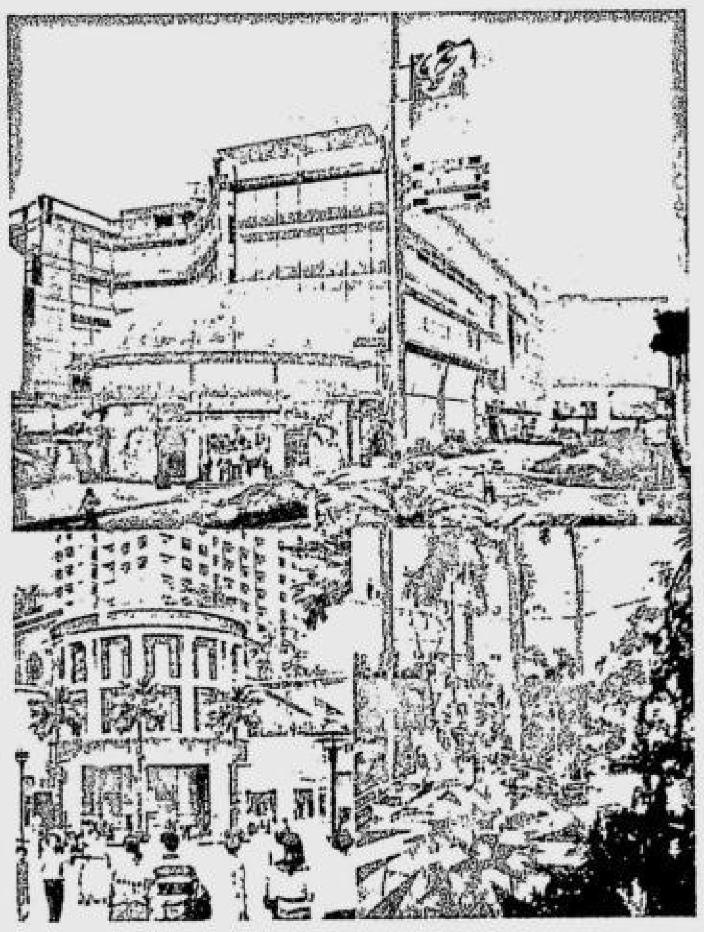

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Tile Art and Architecture

LIVING ARCHITECTURE

Marcos de Guzman Jr.

THE ART OF CERAMIC TILE PAINTING HAS its origins in the hand-made clay bricks decorated with pigment first seen in ancient structures of the near east. We still see traces of this art form in the Egyptian pyramids, the ruins of Greece and the archeological finds of Babylon. The skill seems to have been perfected in Persia, where the intricacy and vividness of design first peaked. The very term for tile comes from the Latin word, tegula, which means baked roof tile, and similarly to the French word, tuile. Early examples of this art can also be seen in China, originally used as gifts and offerings to royalty and their deified ancestors. In the Mediterranean, ceramic tiles have been widely used by the Moors to adorn their places of worship, and eventually, their homes. In structures in Spain and Italy, it is found as an integral architectural piece, even to this day.

ARCHITECT Bart Aguas, the tile artist

Artist at heart

In the Philippines, the name Bart Aguas is now synonymous to tile art. He is an architect by profession, just like his father; he has been married to Rita Marasigan for the past 10 years; and, despite his humble denials, he has always been an artist at heart. He was my schoolmate since grade school at the Ateneo de Manila University and through college at the University of Sto.Tomas, where he has always shown a penchant for art. Bart resides in Angono, lending even more credence to the claim that artists do tend to congregate in that area. However, he insists that he does not have the temperament of an artist, only the passion.

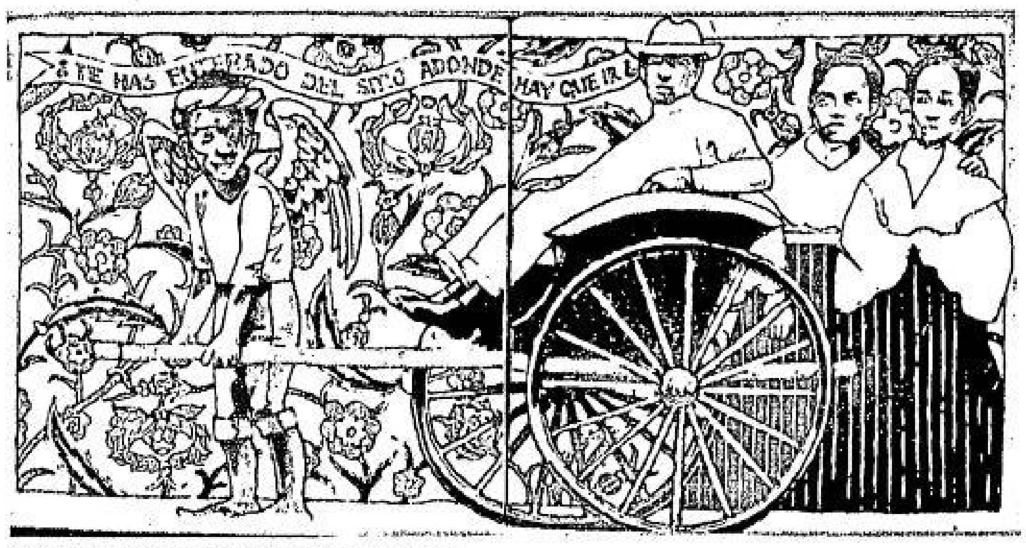
Like most successful ventures, Bart's passion started out of a need. He was looking for accent tiles for a house he was designing but was not satisfied with those available in the market locally. His client resorted to buying and hand-carrying the tiles from Europe. Although the quality was acceptable, the designs did not satisfy him fully. This prompted him to study how to paint the tiles himself, create his own designs, and experiment on the procedure.

Tedious process

He discovered that ceramic tile painting is a tedious process. One would need a considerable amount of patience and dedication to create products like these. It is not enough to know the technology behind it. You must have the talent to be able to maximize the potential of this art form. While painting on the tile surface, you do not see the final outcome. What you initially get are dull hues. It is only after baking that the real colors come out. It is not enough that you know the process of tile painting. Oxides and chemicals, which produce the colors, must be mixed precisely and carefully to achieve the effect you desire. Therefore, one would likewise need significant experience, combined with vision, to produce the perfect art piece.

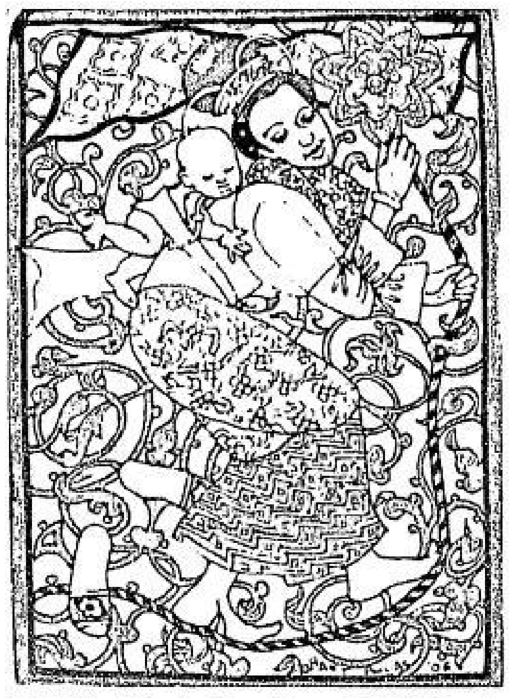
Creating tile art cannot be a hurried, mass-production exercise. Each finished tile is a one-of-a-kind piece, invested with time, skill and imagination. Every tile would certainly add value to any home. It can be employed as architectural ornament or as artistic piece, finding its way as wall accents, religious icons for altar niches, decoration for stair risers, or even as house numbers. I have seen these beautiful tiles used as tabletops, murals, framed hangings, and accent pieces, among others—practically anywhere you can use a tile!

Bart says there is an endless choice of subject matters to paint. He, however, likes to create Filipiniana images and new takes on religious icons. His clients can also dictate the theme and he develops it based on what they want. The choice of colors would likewise depend on where the tile art is intended to be displayed.



¿TE HAS ENTERADO DEL SITIO ADONDE HAY CAFE IR L

"SCENARIO Uno," a Filipiniana art piece



"DAMA de Noche," mother and child tile art

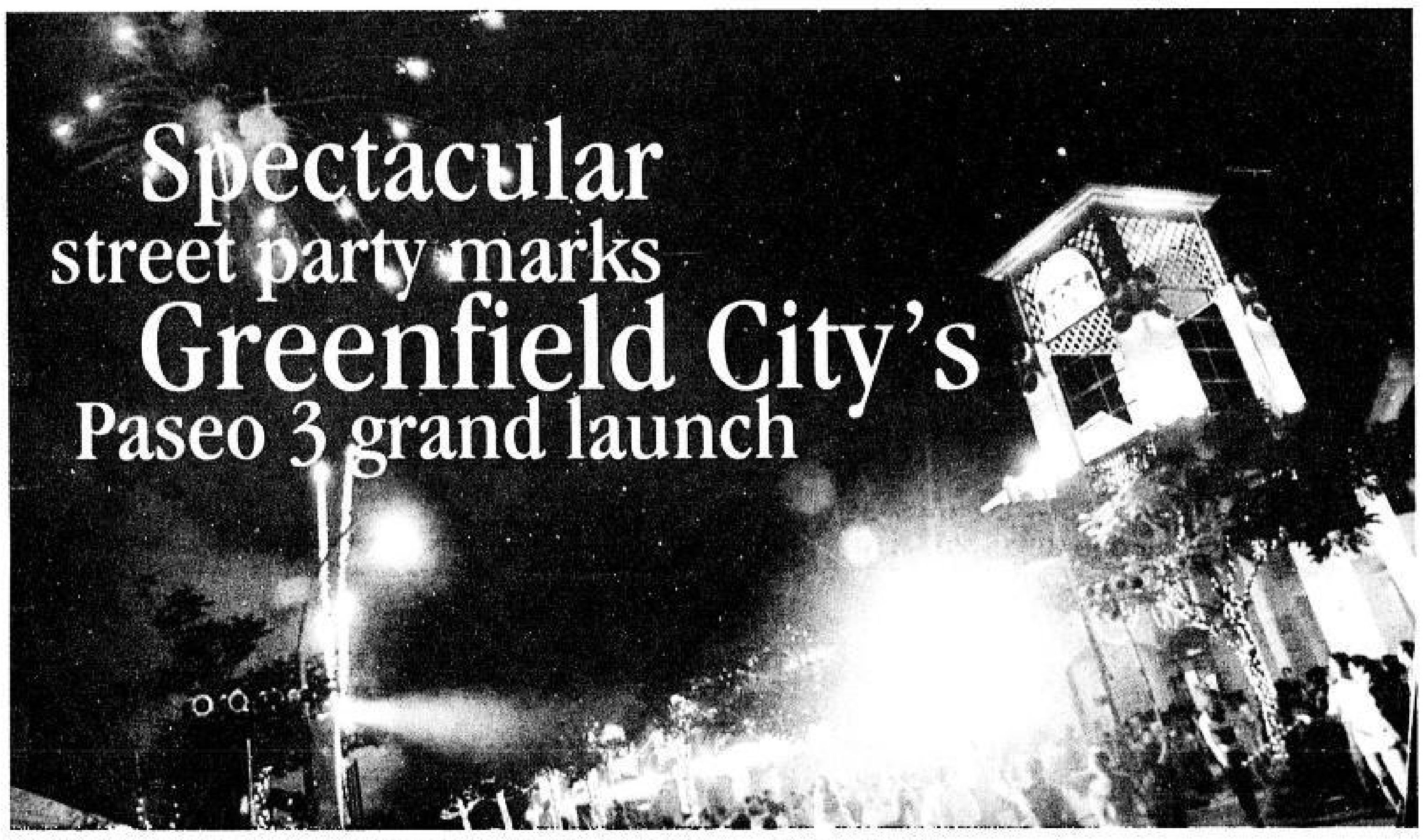
Appreciates in value

Like many art pieces, tile art appreciates in value. The designs are unique and can be personalized to the client's liking. With proper care, it can last a lifetime and can possibly become an heirloom. What a novel way to distinguish a home or set it apart. Tile art can lend an area a distinct and memorable character all its own.

Bart regularly holds exhibits, showing off his selection or art tiles in popular galleries and ateliers. He is currently preparing for a scheduled show in mid-September at the Art-informal Gallery on Connecticut Street in Greenhills. For details on the exhibition and his works, you can get in touch with him through text at 09163592371.

Tile art is a wonderful art form, both as familiar to the ancients as it is fresh to present-day viewers. It can tie up the look of a room or jump out at you as an accent piece. It can hold a valuable niche in a family's treasury of mementoes, but it can also be an exceptional gift for someone special.

Spectacular street party marks Greenfield City's Paseo 3 grand launch



SPECTACULAR fireworks display was among the highlights at the Paseo 3 grand launch party.

IT WAS A SCENE REMINISCENT OF A COLORful Mardi Gras party with live music performances, poi dancers, spectacular fireworks display and yes, signature beads to boot as Greenfield Development Corp. (GDC) celebrated the opening of Paseo 3, the newest retail strip of Paseo de Sta. Rosa.

The successful launch party, graced by Sen. Pia Cayetano along with top local officials—lawyer N. R. Joaquin representing Congresswoman Uliran Joaquin, Gov. Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro and Mayor Arlene Arcillas-Nazareno—kicked off with live dance beats from Tribu Manila, followed by a ceremonial piñata breaking participated in by the VIP guests and Greenfield Development Corp. key executives led by general manager Lawrence S. Ong, and vice president Duane Santos.

THE TAPPING of the symbolic sun signals the formal opening of Paseo 3.

Newest retail strip

The country's first outlet supercenter and suburban leisure escape south of Metro Manila now boasts of a bigger, more exciting range of shopping, dining and entertainment choices with the new Paseo 3. Right at the heart of boomtown Santa Rosa in Laguna and part of the masterplanned Greenfield City, Paseo de Sta. Rosa is seen as a must-visit shopping destination for residents of nearby Calamba, Batangas and Tagaytay areas. Even Metro Manila residents travel to this leisure center as it is only 45 minutes away from nearby Makati City.

Said Mayor Arcillas-Nazareno: "This is an exciting day for us because we know Paseo 3 will further enhance the wonderful community of Sta. Rosa. Rest assured the city government will continue to support GDC developments, programs and activities in the future."

"I go biking every week and Paseo de Sta. Rosa is a favorite stop for me and my biking buddies," Senator Cayetano, a regular at Paseo De Santa Rosa also revealed. "The great thing about the place is that it embraces modernization yet fervently held on to tradition; it even creates opportunities for homegrown businesses to thrive. Now with Paseo 3, all the more reason for us to come!"

Novel options

With the opening of Paseo 3, Paseo de Sta. Rosa is poised to offer novel options to value shoppers. This additional strip of retail shops and establishments provide visitors with easy, convenient access to a wide array of lifestyle choices. Culinary choices include favorite haunts such as Tapa King and Brothers Burger, and more recent dining destinations like Steak MD, Umenoya, Oyako Korean & Japanese Restaurant, Takeshi Restaurant, ICHI Japanese Restaurant, Mulan Chinese Restaurant, Poquito Mas, Babycakes, Rice Bowl, Michell's Cakes & Pastries and Jamarra Bar.

Completing the phase is a wide array of establishments for basic and specialized needs, like Han-A-Reum Mart, Gymtastics, Bags 'E, VHB Paseo Skin Care Clinic, Jacquiline Aguilar Ortho Dental Clinic, Trim N' Style Salon, 360 Degrees Spa, Paradigm Salon, Bonny's Barbers Den, Neo Spot Internet Café and Bank of Commerce.

Welcome dev't

The expansion of Paseo de Sta. Rosa reflects the city's fast rise as one of the South's most progressive cities. As Governor Lazaro remarked during Paseo 3's launch party, *"Kami ay natutuwa dahil lahat tayo ay nakikisaya sa ipinagdiriwang nating pagbubukas ng Paseo 3, isang simbolo ng tunay na kaunlaran ng Sta. Rosa* (We're very happy that everyone has joined us in celebrating the opening of Paseo 3, a true symbol of Sta. Rosa's progress). We hope that local officials, investors and residents will bond together for the continued progress and success of the city."

Lawyer Joaquin, son of Laguna Congresswoman Uliran Joaquin, shared the locals' enthusiasm, saying, "Paseo 3 is indeed a welcome development in Sta. Rosa, a major investment in the city that we are truly proud of."

For more information on Paseo De Santa Rosa and Greenfield Development Corp., please call 420-8003 or (049) 541-2845, e-mail marketing@greenfield.com.ph or log on to www.greenfield.com.ph.

FROM LEFT are Sta. Rosa Mayor Arlene Arcillas-Nazareno, Sen. Pia Cayetano and Laguna Gov. Teresita Lazaro.

RP property values can increase 35%

From page B2-1

"Always try to imagine what the place will look like if there are a thousand more like you buying a house in that area. The green, refreshing view would probably be lost," Cruz said.

He stressed that there are also huge costs attached to buying and selling houses.

"In the Philippines, it can reach up to 35 percent of the property value, one of the highest in Asia. Because of this cost, houses, in effect, carry a 'No Return No Exchange' tag. Unlike other goods that carry a service warranty, houses don't. Once turned over, all the costs for fixing and repairing the house will be paid by the new owner," Cruz said.

Floods

Cruz warned buyers "not take their agent's words as gospel truth."

If the agent says that it never floods in that area, you cannot complain to him/her if it actually does when you start living there.

There are also no guarantees if the agent promises that the neighborhood is safe, and that a new church, school, MRT and mall will be built nearby in the foreseeable future.

The agent might also promise you that your prospective house's value will increase tenfold within a few years. Again, there are no guarantees. Experience from the Asian crisis shows that the value of luxury condominiums in the Philippines fell by more than 50 percent from 1997 to 2004 (http://globalpropertyguide.com/articleread.php?article_id=85&cid=4).

Travel time

"The amount of travel time stated in most property developers' brochures are also often underestimated. It might be a 30-minute drive from Ortigas to Antipolo City, if and only if there is absolutely no traffic (which happens only during Good Friday). Commuting time should be considered instead. Even if you have a car, not all your friends and relatives do," Cruz said.

It is also wise for the buyer to visit the house several times in different days and at different times of the day. The quiet neighborhood that you first visited might be dusty and smoke-filled during peak traffic hours or noisy and unruly on weekends.

Cruz cautioned buyers that other warnings that might be downplayed by your agent or developer are the risks of earthquake, landslides and flood.

Least efficient

A news release by Global Property Guide last week pointed out that the Philippine housing market is Asia's least efficient. Exceptionally high tax, transaction and other costs discourage the provision of housing, and the Philippines' house price to income ratio is very high, in comparative terms.

"The market cannot efficiently provide housing, if it is saddled with unnecessary costs," Cruz said. "In the Philippines, the round-trip transaction costs of buying and selling a property can easily reach 35 percent of the property value because of the 12 percent VAT. This is on top of the 6 percent capital gains tax and 5 percent agent's fee."

Study

In a study involving a detailed comparison of housing purchase costs in Asia, the Global Property Guide found a clear correlation between high transaction costs and unaffordable housing (measured by house-price-to-income ratios).

Global Property Guide indicated that countries with high transaction costs tend to have expensive houses and large slum populations. The Philippines comes out bottom-of-class in the entire region.

The news release pointed out that in Manila, Jakarta, Shanghai and Seoul condominium prices are much higher (measured by house-price-to-income ratios) than in developed countries. It stated that house-price-to-income ratios are generally regarded as the best measure of housing affordability.

The Philippine government's tax-everything-in-sight policy helps no one, according to the Global Property Guide. "To avoid the capital gains tax, at present most buyers in the Philippines bribe tax assessors to lower the appraised value of the property. This doesn't help the government collect taxes," Cruz said in a news statement.

"International experience suggests that reducing transaction taxes actually increases compliance and the government's tax-take."

Global Property Guide also stressed that the Philippines' outdated cadastral system also greatly increases legal costs, the report adds. Only 10 million of the Philippines' estimated 25 million land parcels are registered. It is estimated that it will take 75 years before complete titling coverage is achieved.

The Philippines also has the highest number of procedures involved in registering property, followed by Indonesia and South Korea. Both these factors increase legal and estate agent's costs, especially for high-end properties where the risks are higher.

New York inspires Manhattan Garden City

EVERY DAY, FROM SUNRISE TO THE NEXT dawn, Manhattan in New York City hosts a flurry of activities as "The city that never sleeps." People walk at every corner to embark at the nearest subway station. Men and women go in and out of restaurants. Shoppers flock to the mecca of Fifth Avenue, while those who want to spend time alone or with their family members troop to Central Park.

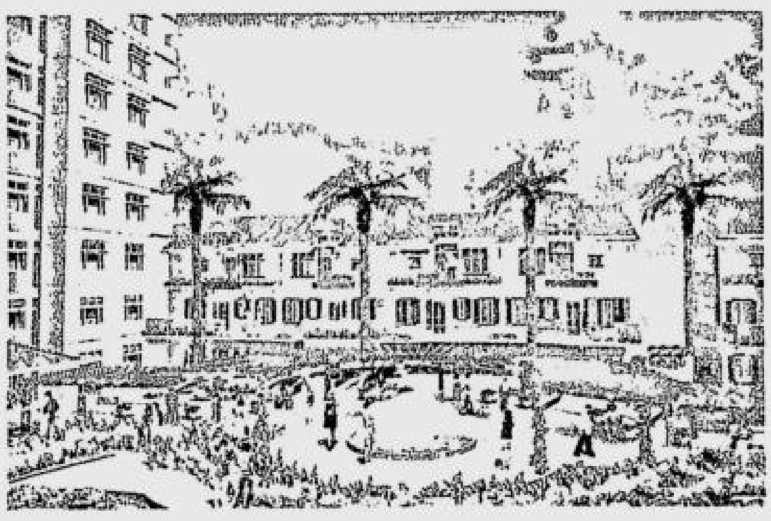
This scenario will soon be emulated right here at the very heart of Metro Manila within the Araneta Center—the country's very first lifestyle and leisure center. Five hectares of this 35-hectare prime property will soon transform into Manhattan Garden City.

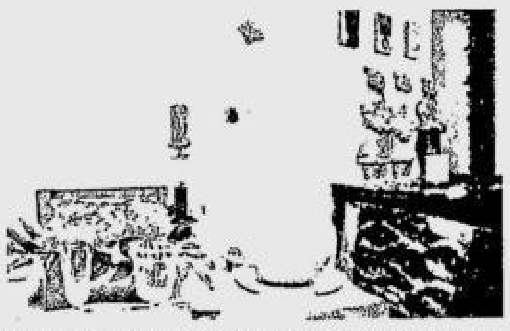
Characteristics of Manhattan

Going by this new city's very auspicious name, top developer Megaworld Corp. planned and designed its towers to reflect the characteristics that make Manhattan renowned the world over. Manhattan Garden City's first phase, the three-tower Manhattan Parkway Residence, features curvilinear roofs that give a distinctive look to the new skyline and give it a more dynamic silhouette. Its colors are warm and striking to reflect the upbeat character of the new Araneta Center, Megaworld Central Properties Inc. president Anthony Charlemagne Yu shared.

As to planning this new city, "The major elements we considered are connectivity, transit access, community integration and urban transformation," he narrated.

Foot bridges connect the residents of all the residential towers of Manhattan Garden City to one another and to the area's main transit terminals—the LRT2 and MRT3 stations. This makes Manhattan Garden City the first and only transit-oriented development in the country that boasts of direct connection to the two transit systems, thus making going around the metro a breeze for residents.


A GARDEN setting at the podium deck provides a nature-centered amenity area.


THE ONE-BEDROOM unit is a big hit among homebuyers.

GET a preview of the luxurious Manhattan Garden City lifestyle in this two-bedroom unit.

Nature-centered

A garden setting at the podium deck provides a nature-centered amenity area that serves as a communal space for residents. This becomes their "Central Park," where neighbors can exchange pleasant stories and children can make friends. They have many activities to choose from: swimming at the lap pool, reading at the benches, jogging at the winding paths, or billiards at the game room.

More than building towers, Yu hopes that Manhattan Garden City will transform the Araneta Center into a world-class residential area, with strong emphasis on nature-centered amenities that dissipate the feeling of urban congestion. "The Araneta Center features of variety of shopping choices, but in the near future, it will also host world-class office buildings and even a hotel, which altogether combine to bring about a good quality of life for our residents," he shared.

Sold out

With all these project advantages, it is no wonder that Manhattan Garden City's first tower, which features close to 500 studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units, was recently sold out. "Thus, we are launching Tower 2 immediately to make more and more people live in and experience the vibrancy of the new Araneta Center. And this will be easy for them to do with Homelite, which offers low interest rates and terms up to 25 years to pay," Yu announced.

Investors and home buyers can check out the Manhattan Garden City showroom at the 3rd level of Gateway Mall or call 810-3333 or e-mail inquire@themanhattangardencity.com for a viewing appointment.

Creba-La Salle real estate, environment planning lecturers

THE CHAMBER OF REAL ESTATE and Builders Associations (Creba) and the De La Salle College of St. Benilde School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPaCE) announced the lecturers for the course on "Real Estate and Environmental Planning" for professionals and real estate developers and allied builders as part of a postbaccalaureate diploma program in real estate management. It will be conducted every Saturday from Jan. 27 to March 3 on the 9th floor, CSB International Conference Center, Estrada St. cor. Arellano St., Malate, Manila.

The course is designed for developers, landowners, city and community planning officers, architects, engineers and other professionals, said Roque A. Magno, overall program coordinator. He is a professorial lecturer at the University of the Philippines School of Urban and Regional Planning and former commissioner for planning, Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (HULRB).

Lecturers

Among the lecturers are Magno, nature and scope of environmental planning: human settlements, and land use planning concept: comprehensive land use planning; engineer Carlito M. Santo Jr., water supply and sanitation; Dr. Alma Bella P. Madrazo, chair, Tel-ra-Tech EM Inc., solid waste management; architect Ma. Victoria B. Antonio, LVA Associates, League of Cities of the Philippines, strategic planning: urban planning context.

Other lecturers are Crispin Emmanuel Diaz and Prof. Hussein Lidasan, (UP SURP), transportation and infrastructure; lawyer Amado B. Deloria, former HLURB commissioner, public domain utilization and protected areas; engineer Sixto L. Tolentino Jr. EnP, director, Environment Management Bureau Region 4, Department of Environment and Natural Resources; Delia Jasel, director, Mindanao Basic Urban Sector Services, Philippine planning system; Prof. Ernesto M. Serote, director for training, UP SURP, plan implementation in the Philippines; and Dr. Nathaniel von Einsiedel, chair, Concep Inc., past Creba national president, urban planning profession in the Philippines, and integration and examination.

The two earlier modules tackled an overview of the real estate markets and practices, and real estate laws and regulations. The program covers six modules. Initiated in 2002, the program is open to present and would-be practitioners in the real estate business and service industry. For inquiries, e-mail space@dis-csb.edu.ph; or creba_inc@yahoo.com.

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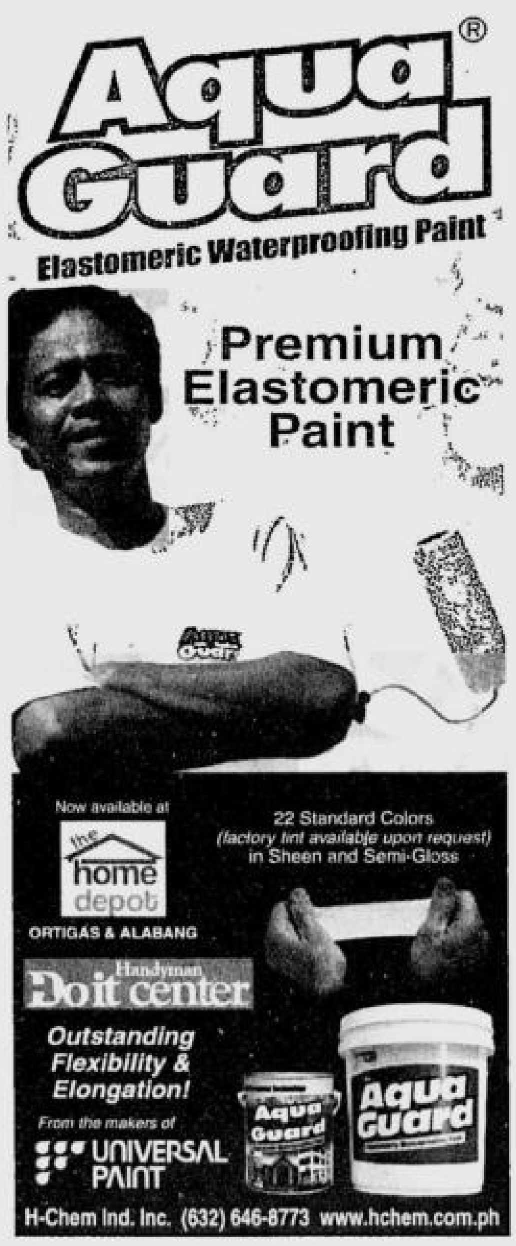
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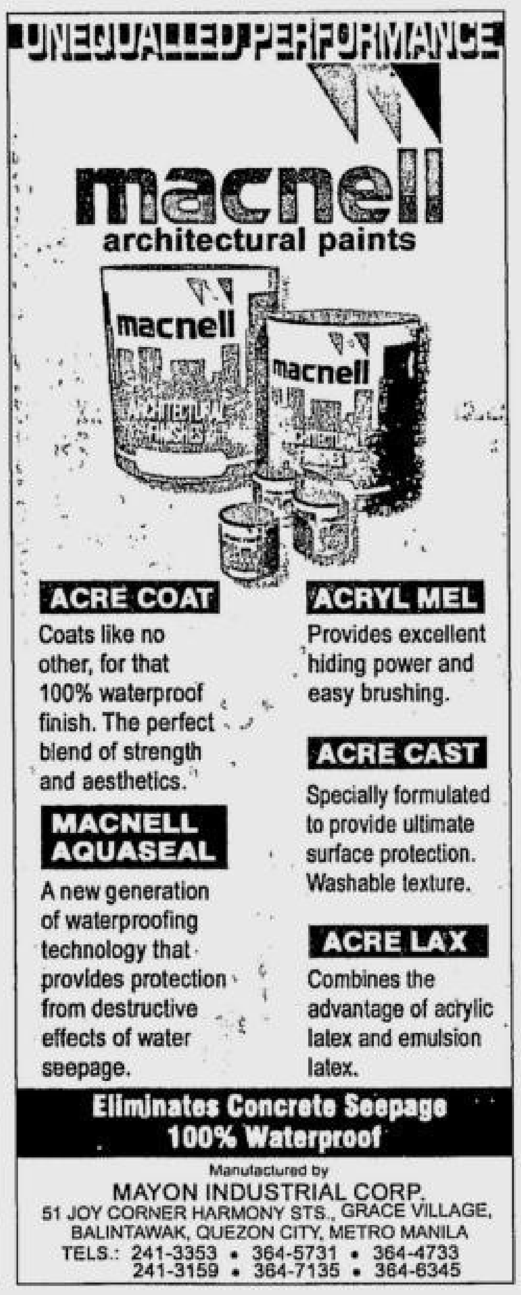
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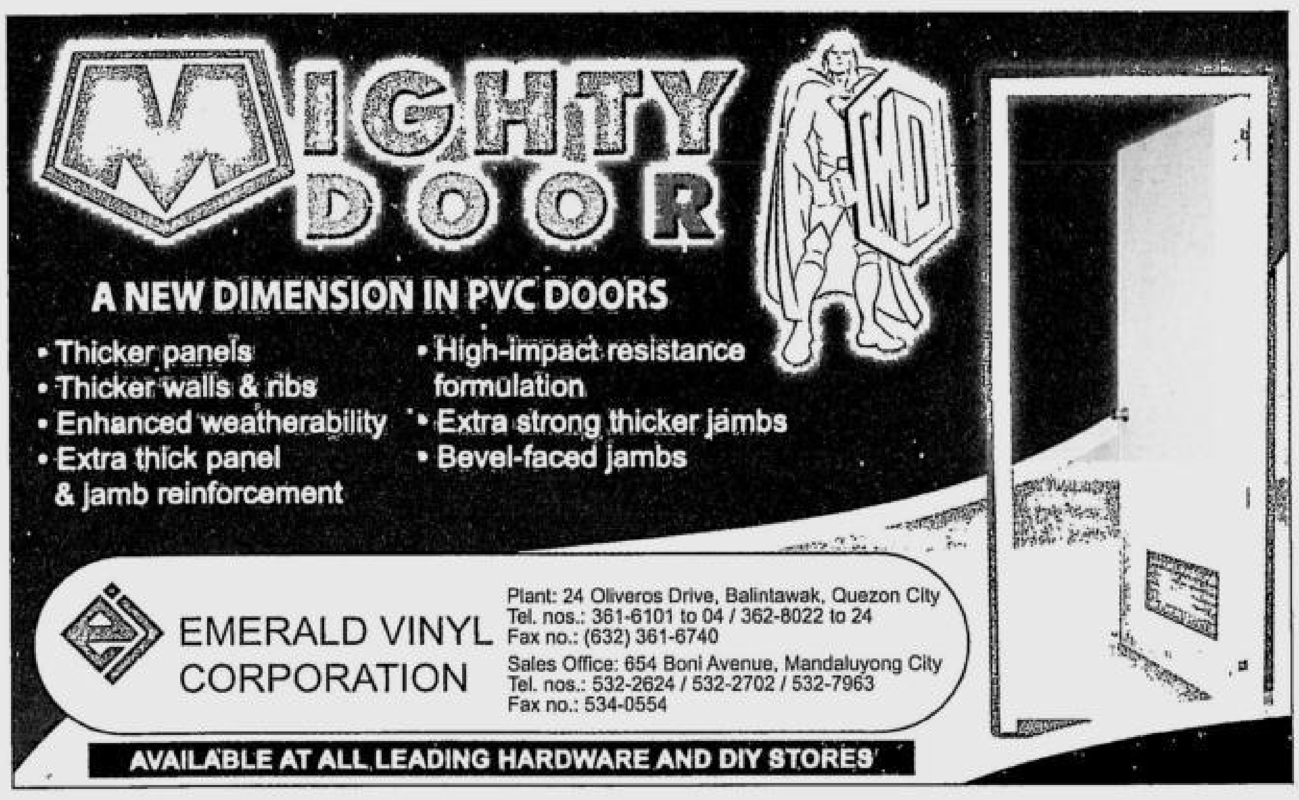
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I-C Pasay

12th Floor Taft Ave., & A. Luna Sts. EGI
Rufino Plaza, Condo., Gil Puyat, Pasay City
12-1A 61.50 sq.m. P 2,613,877.50
12-1B 67.59 sq.m. P 2,872,405.00
12-1D 62.20 sq.m. P 2,830,009.00
12-1E 55.46 sq.m. P 2,357,135.00
12-1F 57.27 sq.m. P 2,434,017.50
12-2A 41.44 sq.m. P 1,761,370.00
12-2B 42.96 sq.m. P 1,825,927.50
12-2C 43.95 sq.m. P 1,999,588.75
12-2D 65.14 sq.m. P 2,963,779.00
12-2E 56.63 sq.m. P 2,406,775.00
12-2F 64.28 sq.m. P 3,278,076.25
12-2G 63.70 sq.m. P 3,201,025.50
12-3A 40.11 sq.m. P 1,704,760.00
12-3B 27.91 sq.m. P 1,186,175.00
12-3C 70.11 sq.m. P 3,277,736.25
12-3D 63.56 sq.m. P 2,971,570.50
12-3E 57.56 sq.m. P 2,446,130.00
12-3F 63.24 sq.m. P 3,225,987.50
12-3G 64.75 sq.m. P 3,399,427.50
12-4A 61.02 sq.m. P 2,593,350.00
12-4B 80.30 sq.m. P 3,412,580.00
12-4C 69.33 sq.m. P 3,241,318.00
12-4D 63.59 sq.m. P 2,972,832.50
12-4E 55.70 sq.m. P 2,367,292.50
12-4F 56.82 sq.m. P 2,460,142.50
12-4G 65.80 sq.m. P 3,075,916.50
TOTAL - EGI Rufino 11 & 12th Floor
1,521.92 sq.m. P 68,879,204.75

I-D. Makati City

Vacant lot Rizal Drive cor. Mckinley Parkway & 21st Drive Fort Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City, M.M. 3203 sq.m., 5129 sq.m. P 121,116,835.12

Condo Unit Unit 33B Tower 2, Salcedo Park Condominium, Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City
180 sq. m. P11,160,000.00

Office condo units 9th Flr. Highrise Tower, Pacific Star Bldg., Makati Ave., corner Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City
245.87 sq.m. P 15,522,350.46
239.03 sq.m. P 15,077,662.11
230.97 sq.m. P 14,553,657.99
234.70 sq.m. P 14,796,156.18
245.94 sq.m. P 15,526,901.36
247.53 sq.m. P 15,630,271.90
1444.04 sq.m. P 91,107,000.00 Total

I-E. San Juan/ Mandaluyong/ Pasig City/ Taguig

Res'l House & lot No. 434 M.H. del Pilar St., Bo. Pinagbuhatan St., Pasig City 1,594 sq.m P 7,818,000.00

Res'l House & lot along the west side of Callejon, Purok 1-Adia, Bagumbayan, Taguig City 366 sq.m P 1,132,000.00

I-F. Las Piñas/ Parañaque/ Muntinlupa City

Land & Bldg. No.5 Gemma Cruz St., BF Resort Vill., Las Piñas City 240 sq.m. P 4,888,000.00

Site I - Industr'l w/ imprvt St. George St., Sto Niño, Phase 4 Brgy. Tunasan, Muntinlupa 143 sq.m., 143 sq.m., 115 sq.m., 401 sq.m. P 10,925,000.00

Site II - Industr'l vacant lot 134 sq.m., 134 sq.m., 143 sq.m., 139 sq.m., 131 sq.m., 681 sq.m. P 10,925,000.00

I-G. Malabon/ Valenzuela/Navotas/Caloocan

Res'l w/ imprvt. No. 119 E. Rodriguez St., North Merville Park II Tanza, Navotas City 254 sq.m. P 4,055,927.00

I. QUEZON CITY AREA

I-A. Quezon City/ Novaliches

Res'l House & lot #46 Luz St., Brgy. San Bartolome, Novaliches, Quezon City 215 sq.m. P 1,024,100.00

Townhouse Unit VILLA ANITA TOWNHOUSES #253 Argao Drive, Baesa, Quezon City 97.50 sq.m. P 3,682,190.00

II. NEARBY PROVINCES

II.A. Bulacan/ Pampanga

Res'l vacant lot Road Lot 9, Bo. Buisan, Bustos, Bulacan 743 sq.m. P 511,000.00

Res'l House & lot Bulak Street, Bo. Malhacan, Meycauyan Bulacan 466 sq.m. P 3,285,000.00

Res'l House & lot No. 188 Lorenzo Ruiz corner Sagrada Familia St., Rosaryville Subd., Tabang, Guiguinto, Bulacan 543 sq.m. P 2,424,000.00

Industrial compound Lot 3927-B-1, Brgy., Loma de Gato, Marilao, Bulacan 18,350 sq.m. P 22,555,000.00

Comm'l/ Res.with imprv'ts No. 88 National Highway, within Brgy. Manga, Candaba, Pampanga
646 sq.m. P 5,540,123.07

Res'l vacant lot Barrio Mabiga, Mabalacat, Pampanga
1,715 sq.m. P 1,029,000.00

Res'l vacant lots Queensborough Phase I & 2, Brgy. San Jose, San Fernando City, Pampanga
lots range from 240 to 430sq.m.

II-B. Antipolo City/ Rizal/Montalban/Cainta

Res'l/ Ind'l.Warehouse/Factory # 2 Callejon Alberto, Gitnang Bayan I Poblacion San Mateo,Rizal
395 sq.m. P 7,803,035.00

Res'l vacant lot Lot 19, Blk. 11, Campupot Drive, Beverly Hills Subd., Bo. Dolores, Taytay, Rizal
857 sq.m. P 1,714,000.00

Res'l w/ imprv't Executive Hills Compound Brgy. Dolores, Taytay Rizal lot 4 1,200 sq.m., lot 3 1,000 sq. m., lot 1 786 sq.m., lot 2 1,000 sq.m., 3,986 sq.m.
P 13,951,000.00

Res'l vacant lots Parkridge Estate, Antipolo City
559 sq.m., 657 sq.m., 553 sq.m., 869 sq.m., 468 sq.m., 465 sq.m., 448 sq.m., 471 sq.m., 454 sq.m., 454 sq.m., 417 sq.m., 450 sq.m., 446 sq.m., 6,711 sq.m. P 21,167,600.00

Res'l vacant lots Pelican Point. cor. Nightingale Dr. & Eaglenest Dr. Victoria Valley Subd., Brgy. Mayamot, Antipolo City
4,501 sq.m., 4,579 sq.m., 3,790 sq.m. P 23,166,000.00

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Developer sees 2007 as another banner year

NOT only building condominiums, Century Properties has also included developing sprawling community projects like the Canyon Ranch in Carmona, Cavite.

By Charles E. Buban

IN LESS THAN TWO DECADES, Century Properties has become the largest privately owned real estate outfit in the Philippines and with its trademark fully fitted and fully furnished developments, the company is now being recognized as one of the most dynamic in the industry.

"When we celebrated our 20th anniversary last year, we considered it our most productive considering that by the year's end, the company has sold more than a thousand units, translating to sales earning of over P5.2 billion," said John Victor Antonio, Century Properties managing director and COO.

Antonio is so confident that he sees 2007 as another exciting year.

"The signs are very clear: The economy is at its most stable in recent years, the peso has reached its nine year high, inflation rates have gone down to a manageable range, and even the international market's assessment of the Philippine economy is quite promising," he said in reference to Standard & Poor's positive commentary in the Asia-Pacific Macroeconomic Overview and 2007 outlook that mentioned a higher economic growth rate awaiting the country this year.

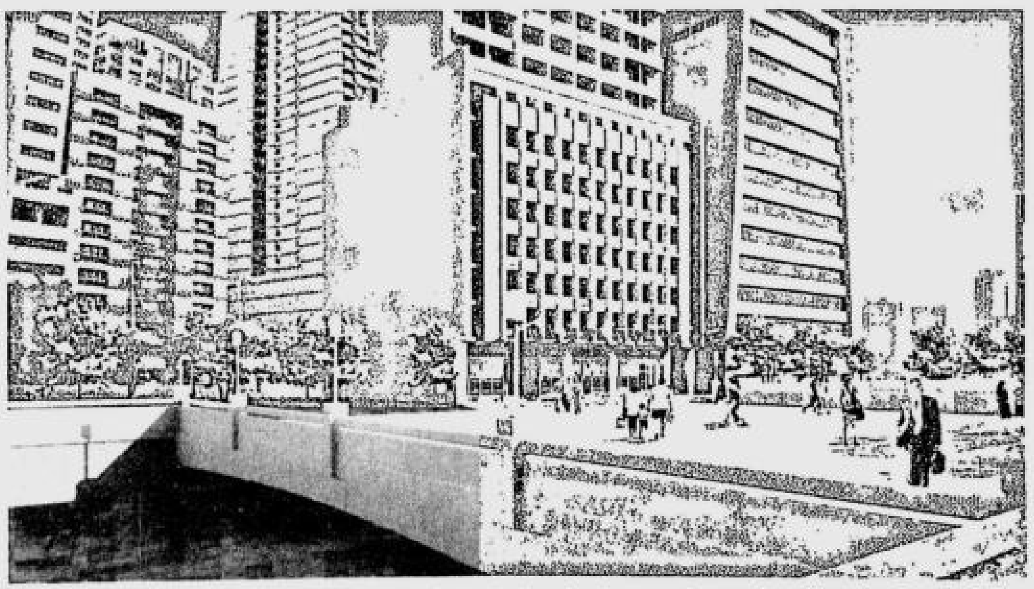
Indeed, with these developments, Century Properties was able to simultaneously develop projects all over Metro Manila as well as in the neighboring Cavite province and sell them in record time.

"We now have Soho Central in the Ortigas Business Center, the first-ever transportation-oriented development in the country, the Grand Soho Makati on Gil Puyat Avenue, the only fully fitted, fully furnished condominium that offers three exceptional interior design options, the South of Market at the Bonifacio Global City in Taguig, and the Canyon Ranch in Carmona, Cavite, the first Wi-Fi integrated residential community in the country," enumerated Antonio.

He also reported that in December last year, the former International School Manila property located on Kalayaan near Makati Avenue was officially turned over to the company.

"The company envisions a completely new urban experience to rise in that 4.8 hectare property. The development will be sprawling mixed-use space integrated with residential, corporate and retail components and will be masterplanned by the same architectural greats behind University Citywalk, the Los Angeles Olympics, Ropponggi Hills in Tokyo and Bellagio Hotel in las Vegas," said Antonio.

Antonio added that with the buying power that Filipinos whether working abroad or those already based abroad plus their renewed trust in the Philippine real estate market, he is confident that Century Properties will again report a very good outcome by year's end.



CENTURY Properties promises to continue delivering innovative project like the Grand Soho Makati along Gil Puyat Avenue.

Home bathroom: one's sanctuary

BATHROOM IS AN ESSENTIAL ENTITY OF one's home. Most of the architects and designers comprehensively thought about what approach they should take to come up with a bathroom design that matches their clients' persona and requirements.

Bathroom is not like any other part of a home; it is considered as an extension of one's individuality and preference. Most people try to make their bathroom as similar as possible from their way of life. You will be surprised when you go to your friend's house and notice the resemblance of his bathroom concept with his lifestyle.

Individuals with an active lifestyle are more eager to rush home and relax those tired muscles acquired from stress at the workplace, school or wherever the pressure is experienced. For some, a simple bath and refreshing shower will do all the works. Refreshing bath or a revitalizing shower is enough to make a person sing on top of his lungs and dance even there is no music playing. That is the magic of bathroom! It is a sanctuary for those people who wish to be just themselves and be soothed from head to toe.

Spa at home is possible without having to spend that much. Scented candles, bath oils and scrubs can make bathing more sensual and invigorating. This is commonly referred to as aromatherapy. This therapy is proven by experts to have natural benefits on a person's physical and psychological well-being. It stimulates the mind and boosts the physical prowess of a person. This activates the exhausted body and brings back the resting senses back to its track.

Bathroom fixtures play a major role in making the bathing experience more inviting and energizing. It creates or breaks the whole idea of sophisticated bathing sanctuary. Investing in a good quality fixture will save you money from plumbing services and spa treatments from the salons. Esthetics and superior product functions are the main basis of wise buyers.

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This is one way of celebrating HCG's 75th Anniversary with a bang!

* washbasin L5513 is sold at P1,750

- Baden OP1
- Baden CC1

from:
- Washbasin L101 = ~~₱5,880~~
- Faucet LF567 = ~~₱7,150~~

now:
- Washbasin L101 = ₱750 only
- Faucet LF567 = ₱750 only

- Baden OP2
- Baden CC2

from:
- Washbasin L102 = ~~₱6,930~~
- Faucet LF567 = ~~₱7,150~~

now:
- Washbasin L102 = ₱750 only
- Faucet LF567 = ₱750 only

- Baden OP3
- Baden CC3

from:
- Washbasin L347 = ~~₱3,970~~
- Faucet LF3000 = ~~₱3,670~~

now:
- Washbasin L347 = ₱750 only
- Faucet LF3000 = ₱750 only

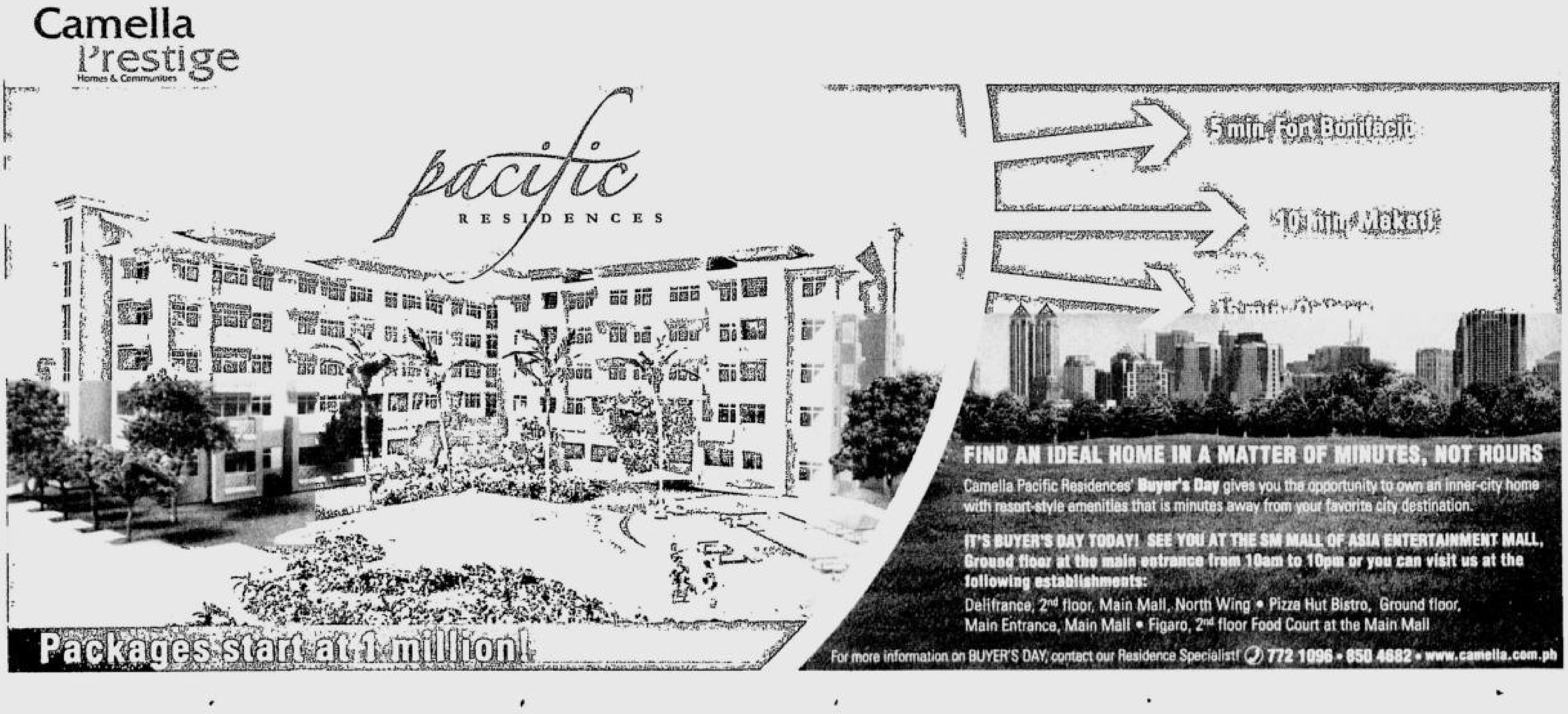
- Baden OP4
- Baden CC4

from:
- Washbasin L5513* = ~~₱6,930~~
- Faucet LF510 = ~~₱4,950~~

now:
- Washbasin L5513* ₱1,750 only
- Faucet LF510 ₱750 only

Hurry! Promo Period until January 31, 2007

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4213 Series of 2006



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SATURDAY, JANUARY 27, 2007

Super!Countdown 18

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

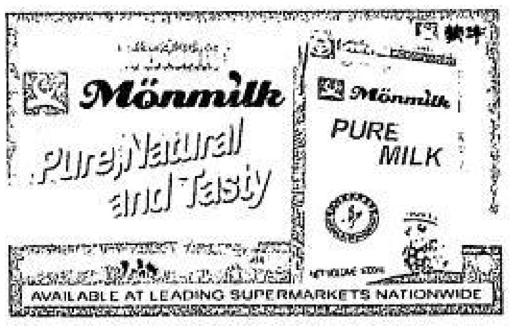
Super

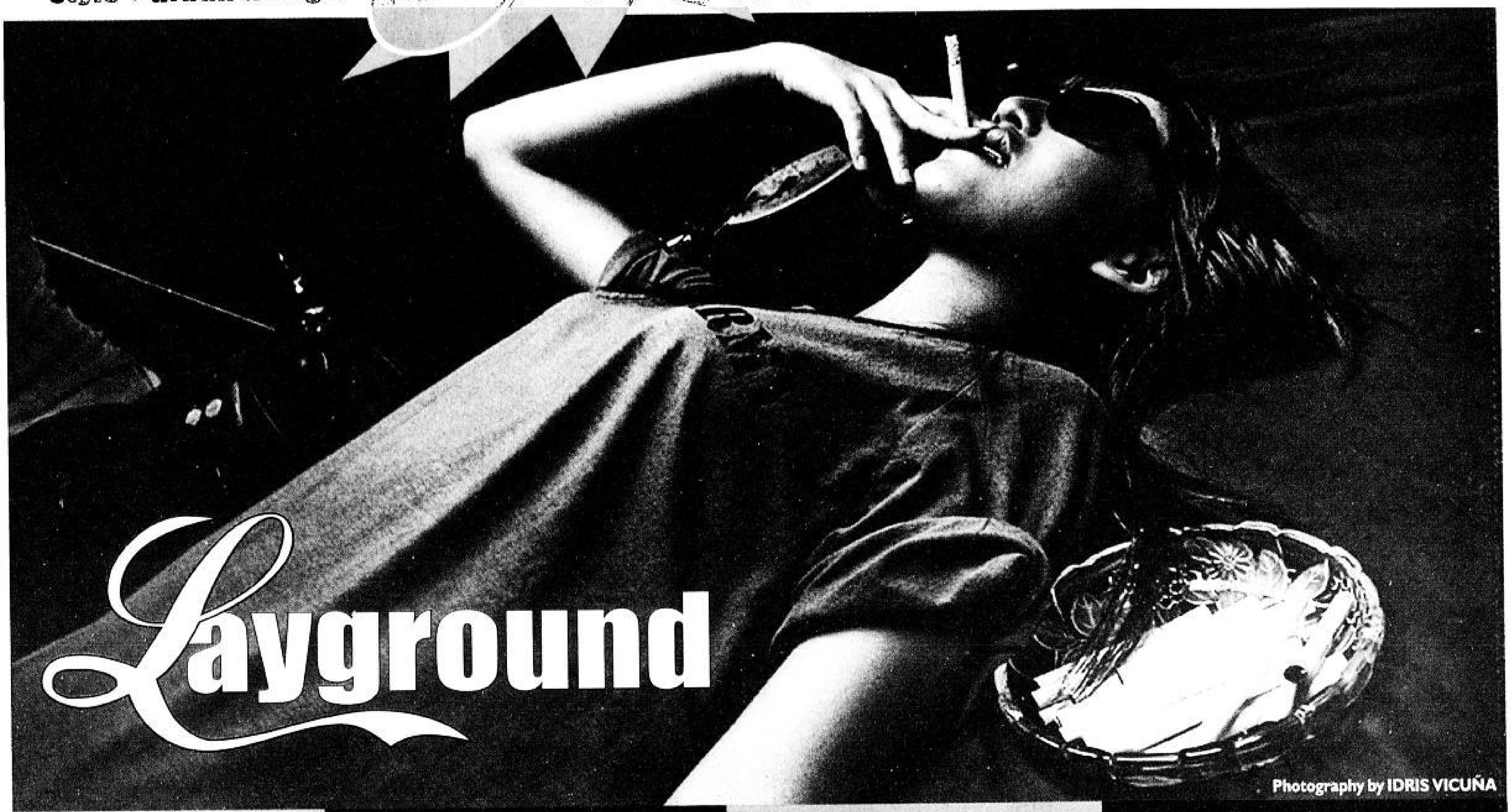
C1

E-mail: super@inquirer.com.ph
Text us your feedback:
inquirer sup name/age/city/message to
2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Editor **Pam Pastor**
Creative Director **Tim Yap**

style . urban living . pop culture . entertainment . recreation


Mönmilk
Pure, Natural and Tasty
Mönmilk PURE MILK
AVAILABLE AT LEADING SUPERMARKETS NATIONWIDE



Photography by IDRIS VICUÑA

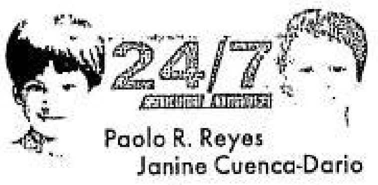
Pepe Diokno Spaces Out page C3

Tals Diaz gazes into the future page C4

Janine Dario and Paolo Reyes plan your week

Gino de la Paz invites you to rock for a cause page C4

The word according to Venus



Paolo R. Reyes
Janine Cuenca-Dario

WHEN THE OLD REPUBlic of Malate burned down and Sanctum finally closed its doors, some foresaw the local spoken-word movement to slowly fade away. But thanks to the efforts of poet-lyricist Kooky Tuason and her "Romancing Venus" albums (spoken poetry set to music and read by a slew of celebrities), women continue to find a myriad of venues to voice their souls for a worthy cause.

On Tuesday, Jan. 30, join Tuason as she leads a femme fatal cast of contemporary Filipina poets—Aimee Marcos, Karen Kunawicz, Charms of Matilda, Rinka, and Annabel Bosch—in a stirring spoken word session, "Venus Takes a Bite," at Conspiracy Garden Café [59 Visayas Ave., Quezon City, phone: 453-2170]. Roger Robinson of the renowned UK-based performance poetry group, Apples & Snakes, will have a special performance, to be followed by music from The Dorques. The show starts at 7 p.m.

If you like what you hear, make sure you grab a copy of the "Romancing Venus" CD. A portion of the proceeds will help benefit the Women's Crisis Center, an organization that attends to the woes of abused and battered women.

Other Super! 24/7 events:

Jan. 27, Saturday

DJ Ricky Stone: Live! at Embassy Club; Lillian Too Feng Shui Extravaganza at SM Mall of Asia; Pinikpikan at 70s Bistro; Cynthia Alexander at Conspiracy; Sonic Boom! w/ Urbandub, Hilera, Dicta License, and The Ambassadors at Saguijo; DJs Paolo Maralit & Cao Ocampo at Jill's; Soundsgood DJs at Embassy Cuisine; DJ Kevin Ruiz at Mezze; House Nation at Capone's; Rouge: Lounge in Color at M Café; DJs Jon Herrera

THE WORD/ C4

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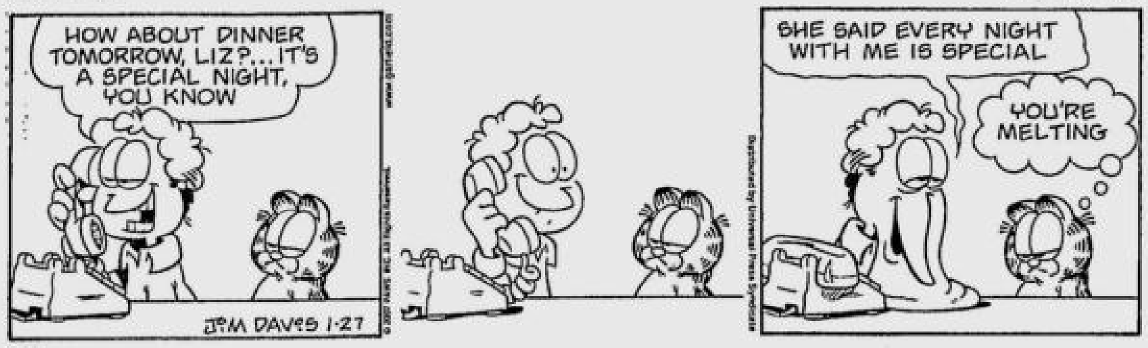
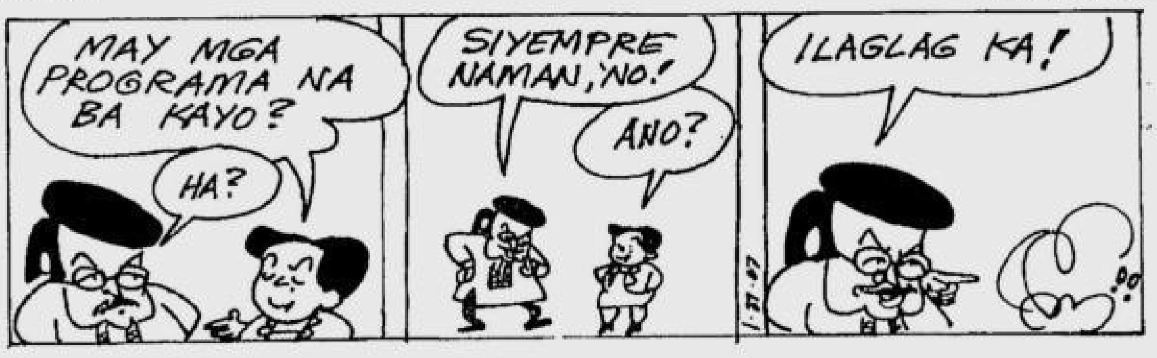
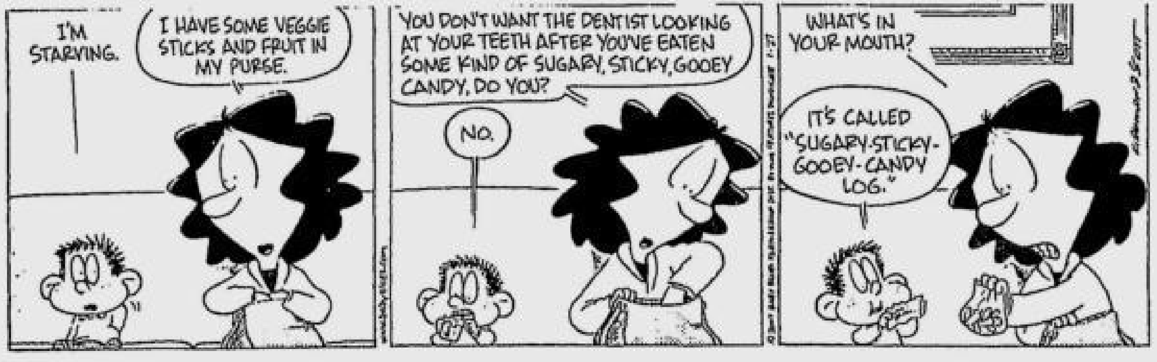
GARFIELD BY JIM DAVIS


HOW ABOUT DINNER TOMORROW, LIZ?... IT'S A SPECIAL NIGHT, YOU KNOW
JIM DAVIS 1-27
SHE SAID EVERY NIGHT WITH ME IS SPECIAL
YOU'RE MELTING

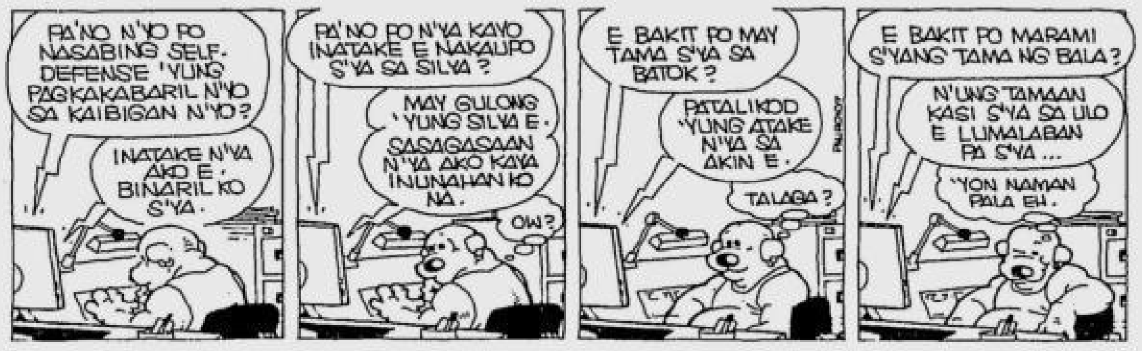
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


MAY MGA PROGRAMA NA BA KAYO?
HA?
SIYEMPRE NAMAN, 'NO!
ANO?
ILAGLAG KA!

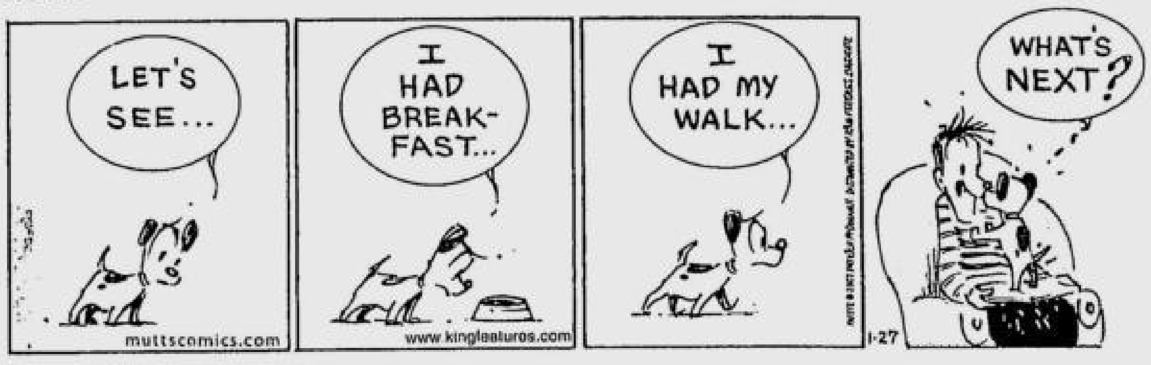
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


I'M STARVING.
I HAVE SOME VEGGIE STICKS AND FRUIT IN MY PURSE.
YOU DON'T WANT THE DENTIST LOOKING AT YOUR TEETH AFTER YOU'VE EATEN SOME KIND OF SUGARY, STICKY, GOOEY CANDY, DO YOU?
NO.
WHAT'S IN YOUR MOUTH?
IT'S CALLED "SUGARY-STICKY-GOOEY-CANDY LOG."

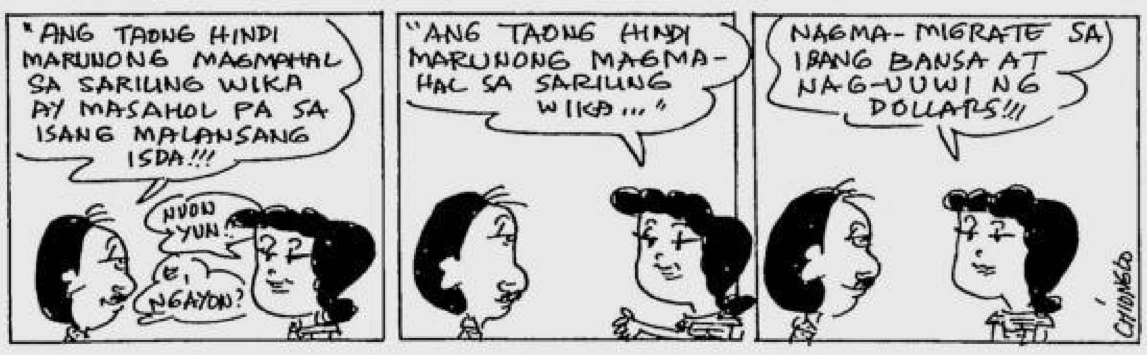
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


PA'NO N'YO PO NASABING SELF-DEFENSE 'YUNG PAGKAKABARIL N'YO SA KAIBIGAN N'YO?
INATAKE N'YA AKO E. BINARIL KO S'YA.
PA'NO PO N'YA KAYO INATAKE E NAKAUPO S'YA SA SILYA?
MAY GULONG 'YUNG SILYA E. SASAGASAAN N'YA AKO KAYA INUNAHAN KO NA.
OW?
E BAKIT PO MAY TAMA S'YA SA BATOK?
PATALIKOD 'YUNG ATAKE N'YA SA AKIN E.
TALAGA?
E BAKIT PO MARAMI S'YANG TAMA NG BALA?
N'UNG TAMAAN KASI S'YA SA ULO E LUMALABAN PA S'YA...
'YON NAMAN PALA EH.

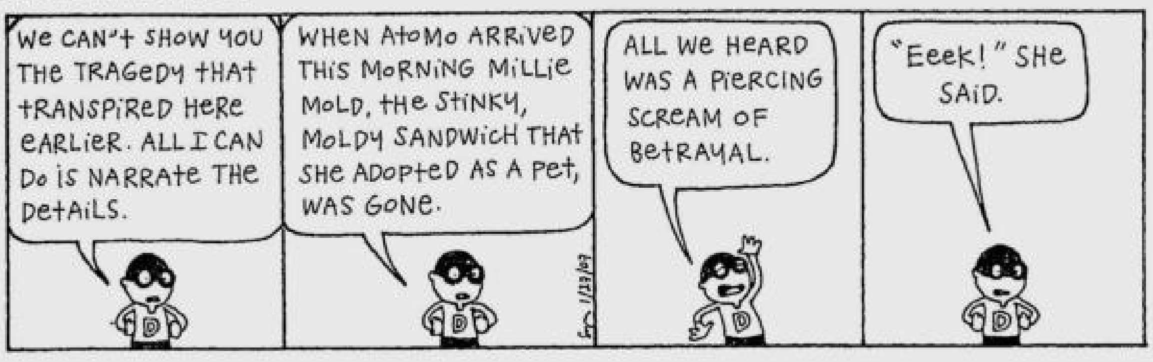
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


LET'S SEE...
I HAD BREAK-FAST...
I HAD MY WALK...
WHAT'S NEXT?
muttscomics.com
www.kingfeatures.com
1-27

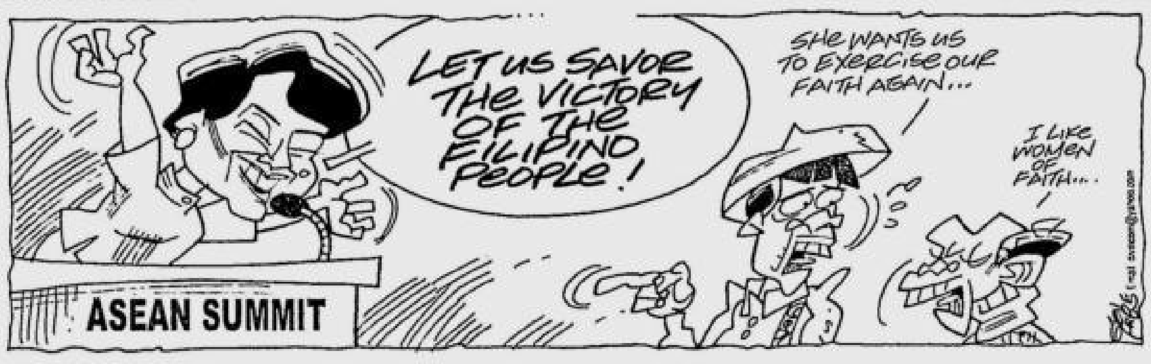
LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


"ANG TAONG HINDI MARUNONG MAGMAHAL SA SARILING WIKA AY MASAHOL PA SA ISANG MALANSANG ISDA!!!
NVON YUN!
E, NGAYON?
"ANG TAONG HINDI MARUNONG MAGMA-HAL SA SARILING WIKA..."
NAGMA-MIGRATE SA IBANG BANSA AT NAG-UUWI NG DOLLARS!!!
CHIONGLO

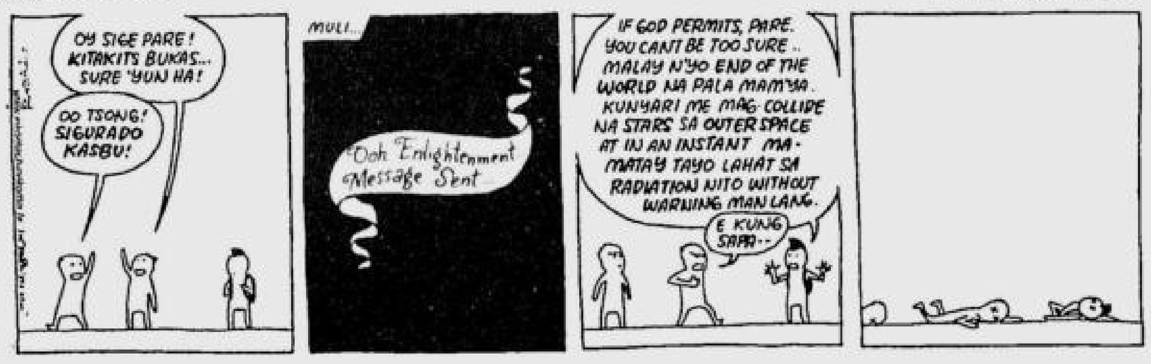
ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


We CAN'T SHOW YOU THE TRAGEDY THAT TRANSPIRED HERE EARLIER. ALL I CAN DO IS NARRATE THE DETAILS.
WHEN ATOMO ARRIVED THIS MORNING MILLIE MOLD, THE STINKY, MOLDY SANDWICH THAT SHE ADOPTED AS A PET, WAS GONE.
ALL WE HEARD WAS A PIERCING SCREAM OF BETRAYAL.
"Eeek!" SHE SAID.

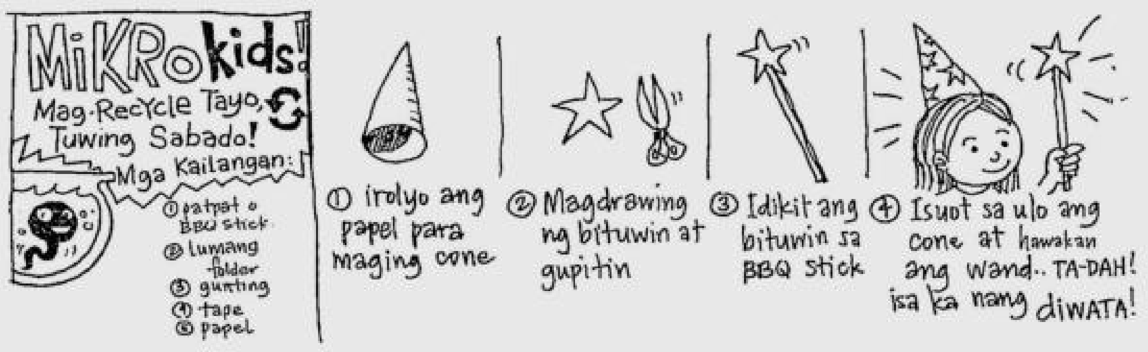
DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


LET US SAVOR THE VICTORY OF THE FILIPINO PEOPLE!
SHE WANTS US TO EXERCISE OUR FAITH AGAIN...
I LIKE WOMEN OF FAITH...
ASEAN SUMMIT

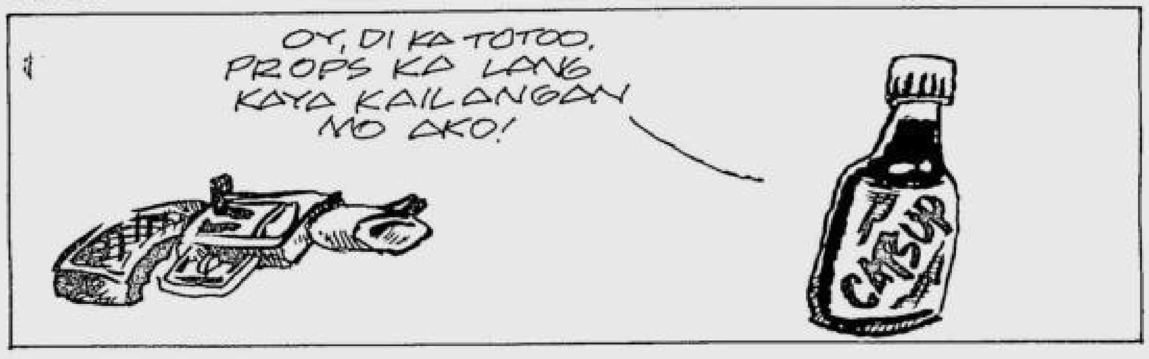
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


OY SIGE PARE! KITAKITS BUKAS... SURE 'YUN HA!
OO TSONG! SIGURADO KASBU!
MULI...
"Ooh Enlightenment Message Sent"
IF GOD PERMITS, PARE. YOU CAN'T BE TOO SURE.. MALAY N'YO END OF THE WORLD NA PALA MAM'YA. KUNYARI ME MAG-COLLIDE NA STARS SA OUTER SPACE AT IN AN INSTANT MA-MATAY TAYO LAHAT SA RADIATION NITO WITHOUT WARNING MAN LANG.
E KUNG SAPA--

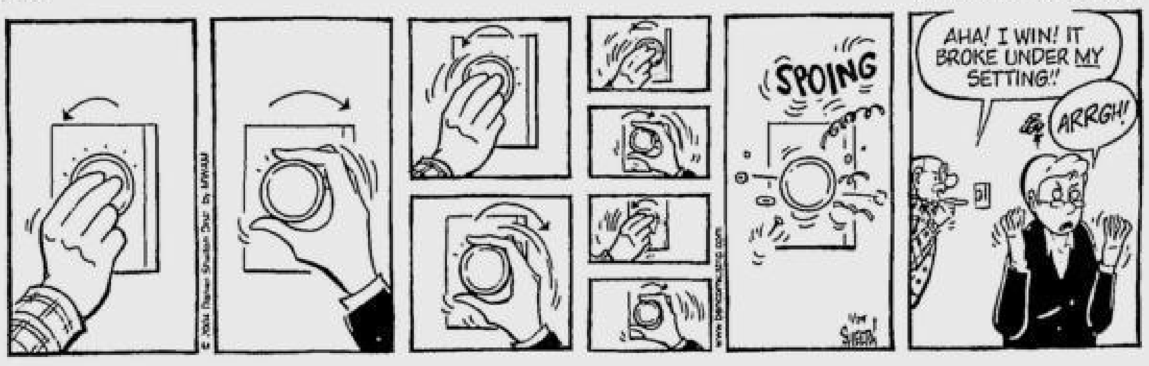
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


MiKRO kids!
Mag-Recycle Tayo, Tuwing Sabado!
Mga Kailangan:
① patpat o BBQ stick
② lumang folder
③ gunting
④ tape
⑤ papel
① irolyo ang papel para maging cone
② Magdrawing ng bituwin at gupitin
③ Idikit ang bituwin sa BBQ stick
④ Isuot sa ulo ang cone at hawakan ang wand.. TA-DAH! isa ka nang diWATA!

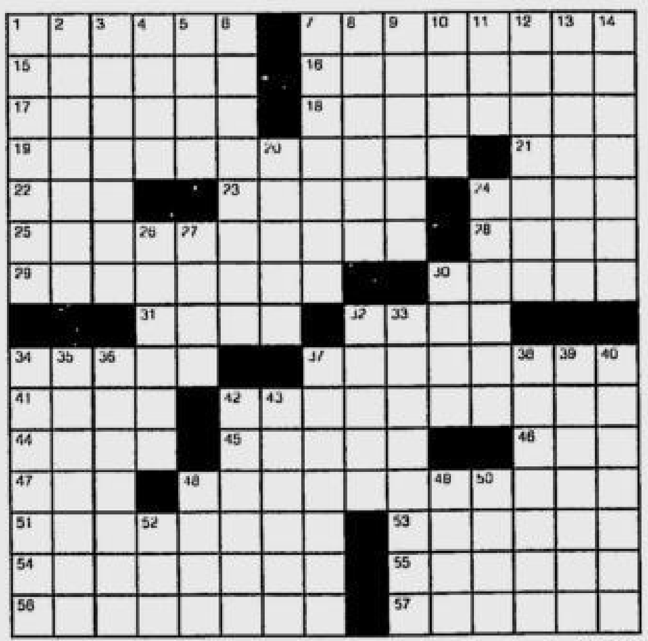
TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


OY, DI KA TOTOO. PROPS KA LANG KAYA KAILANGAN MO AKO!
CATSUP

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


SPOING
AHA! I WIN! IT BROKE UNDER MY SETTING!!
ARRGH!

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Matthew Higgins
Concord, NH
1/27/07

ACROSS
1 Type of laurel
7 Foot-powered rides
15 Melatonin gland
16 Table-setting element
17 Coop up
18 Like cyclic motion
19 Kibbutzim, for example
21 Draw
22 Cool down
23 Spud
24 Sign at a corner
25 Rubbery polymers
28 Recount
29 Men from Brazil
30 Vocal stylist Gorme
31 Sen. Feingold of Wisconsin
32 Fraudulent operation
34 More ironically humorous
37 Passageway
41 Perused
42 Sailor's vacation time
44 Famous cookie man
45 Like leaves and skin
46 10 decades
47 Old French coin
48 Instrument plucked with a plectrum
51 Preludes to peeling
53 Contusion
54 One to whom a document is transferred
55 Missive
56 Some base runners
57 Affirmatives

DOWN
1 Humankind
2 48-card game: var.
3 Ceremonially impure
4 Genuine
5 Type of plum
6 Qualified voters
7 Elusive supernatural beings
8 Forage crop
9 Horse operas
10 Andean tubers
11 Vietnamese holiday
12 Sent forth
13 Italian dish
14 Church topper
20 Makes docile
24 Flummox
26 Tears to pieces
27 Junket
30 Noble title
32 Skin irritations
33 In a plausible manner
34 Colorful marine fishes
35 Get back in the saddle
36 Capital of Cameroon
37 Cadavers
38 Myanmar robber gangs
39 Subject to scrutiny
40 Gives what is due
42 Thinly distributed
43 Nursery-rhyme Jack
48 Fling
49 Native people of Canada
50 Crude dwellings
52 Long, feathery scarf

Friday's Puzzle Solved

N	E	A	T	O		S	I	N	G		O	V	A	L
A	C	T	I	V		A	L	E	R		T	A	L	E
P	R	I	D	E	O	F	E	G	O	T	I	S	T	S
E	U	T	E	R	P	E				I	O	T	A	S
				P	E	T	S		A	E	S			
C	O	M	P	A	N	Y	O	F	G	U	E	S	T	S
A	M	O	U	R			R	E	A	P		E	R	A
R	A	U	L		T	I	G	E	R		S	N	A	G
I	S	R		N	O	S	H			E	R	N	I	E
B	A	N	D	O	F	M	U	S	I	C	I	A	N	S
			A	S	U		M	E	S	H				
D	E	M	M	E				A	P	E	R	I	E	S
C	L	A	S	S	O	F	S	T	Y	L	I	S	T	S
V	E	T	O		F	O	R	E		O	C	E	A	N
I	V	A	N		T	E	A	R		N	O	E	L	S

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1/27/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're a fast study; you learn anything very quickly! Many of you show this talent very early in life. You make speedy decisions. You also like to keep abreast of whatever is modern and new. You don't want to be left behind! The year ahead will be exciting for you, because it offers many new opportunities to explore. Open any door!
Birthdate of: Mimi Rogers, actress; Keith Olbermann, TV commentator; Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, composer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Your patience and grace on behalf of others is appreciated now. You're a generous sign, and your willingness to help those in need is a wonderful thing.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): The next few weeks will be great for you to enjoy good times with friends. You feel much more loving affection for others, and vice versa.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Regardless of what you do for living, you'll probably be asked to give your input in an artistic way—perhaps for something like design, layout, office redecorating or renovations.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Travel for pleasure will please you now and in the next few weeks. You'll also be delighted to learn anything new, because you're hungry for knowledge.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Love relationships that begin now will be particularly sweet and tender. You might also attract money and goods to you from the wealth of others.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Today Venus moves opposite your sign. This is one of the best placements for all relationships, including love affairs or relations with partners, coworkers and even enemies!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Matters having to do with work and health seem to flow more easily now and in the next few weeks. Relations with superiors and coworkers will soften in a pleasant way.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Relations with children will definitely improve now. Creative activities are favored in the next few weeks. Some of you will fall in love!

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Make a point of spending more quiet time at home if you can in the month ahead. Relations with parents will improve. You might want to redecorate.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You're starting to notice that your everyday surroundings are quite agreeable. In fact, in the month ahead you'll discover just how much love there is in your everyday life.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): The next few weeks can be financially favorable for you both in terms of spending money and earning it. Investments made at this time could be advantageous.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): For the next five to six weeks, you will have a stronger-than-usual desire to relate to others. This is an excellent time to make your peace with anyone where it's been a bit sticky.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

	8	3	1	4				
				5				2
								7
			3					4
2	6						8	1
1					9			
5								
6				9				
				6	7	1	9	

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 1/27

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

5	3	4	7	9	6	1	8	2
2	1	8	3	5	4	9	7	6
9	6	7	2	8	1	5	3	4
4	9	2	5	1	3	7	6	8
1	5	3	8	6	7	4	2	9
8	7	6	4	2	9	3	5	1
6	2	1	9	3	5	8	4	7
3	4	9	6	7	8	2	1	5
7	8	5	1	4	2	6	9	3

Difficulty Level ★★★★

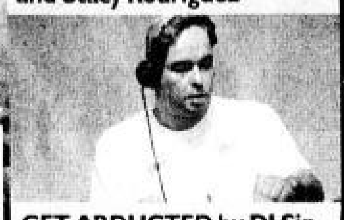
SPACE INVADERS. RJ Ledesma, Cutie del Mar and JM Rodriguez

MANWICH. Spanish flamenco superstars Isaac and Niño delos Reyes hug it out with Astrud and Norman Crisologo

INTERGALACTIC WAX. Brazilian boys love Space Ibiza

PARTY INVASION. Marielle Santos, Leo Po, World Wide Womb's Stephen Ku and Chris Yam

THREE STARS. Tara Tambunting, Nica Mendez and Stacy Rodriguez



GET ABDUCTED by DJ Sin Plomo

SPACE COWBOYS. Joem Sañez, Helena Belmonte, Super!'s David Milan and Hannah Cruz

Space in, spaced out!

Space Ibiza crashed into the World Trade Center and abducted Manila's partyphiles

COUPLE CONSTELLATION. Michelle Pamintuan and Erik Cua

WE COME IN PEACE. Jenni Epperson, Tina Tinio, DJ Montano, Miguel Rosales and Jackie Cohen-Antonio

MANDROID. Will Devaughn

OUT THE GALAXY. Vince del Rosario and Super!'s Tals Diaz

MOTO-SHIP. Mari Litonjua

PARTY BEAMERS. GP Reyes and Chicho Suarez

SHOOTING STARS. Sisters Monica de Castro and Xeng Zulueta

By Pepe Diokno

THERE ARE A FEW THINGS every party-goer must do before his life ends. One of these things is a trip to the club that's probably the closest to heaven. It's a trip to a place where people party literally nonstop, where not a night goes by without world-renowned figures weaving magic behind turntables, where DJs like Carl Cox, Sasha, Väth, and Paul Oakenfold, have played impromptu sets. It's a trip to a place called called Space. And unfortunately for us, it's all the way in Ibiza.

But Manila's fun-seekers prayed hard for Space, and the party gods answered. Last Friday, Motorola and World Wide Womb brought Space to our World Trade Center, which was one stop on The Space Ibiza World Tour, and was packed with drones of the city's funnest peeps.

The time Space spent with us was short but effing sweet. The night started with DJ Owens Sun, who got the crowd wild and amped for renowned DJ Sin Plomo. Sin Plomo is a resident DJ at Space; his name means "green thumb"—and that's apt for someone with the uncanny ability to mix an awesome array of musical styles in perfect harmony, perfectly balancing electronic and instrumental music. He gave Manila a fantastic taste of Ibiza, backed by a state of the art laser light show.

Out in the crowd, lovely Motorola dancers were, in the words of Borat, "Wawaweewa," in their strange science-fiction inspired costumes, while a big blimp circled above people's heads, dropping lucky balls that gave premium Moto items and MotoRIZR phones to those who were just blessed too much. It was a memorable night—or wait, yeah, it was too fun to accurately remember. But the party left an emotional and spiritual dent on those of us who take partying seriously (or, as serious as serious at a party can be).

But remember, Supers, we don't have to wait until a big club comes to town—we're one of the happiest and funnest people in the world. Let's harness that, and make our own kickass scene. If we keep doing that, a few years from now it will be us touring the world. The Embassy World Tour? That sounds Super!

FAMILY FUN ADVENTURE IN HONG KONG

Sy Family Takes on Hong Kong!

A world of fun awaits families in Hong Kong. And this is exactly what the Sy family from the Philippine learned as they represented the country at the 2006 Discover Hong Kong Family Fun Adventure Challenge.

[illegible]

The Road to Hong Kong

[illegible]

Hong Kong Here We Come!

[illegible]

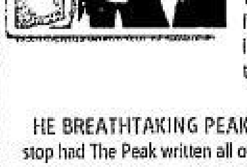
Indeed! Discovering Hong Kong in a day is a truly amazing experience.

SATURDAY, December 2, 2006

THE MAS DIM SUM MAKER
The Sy family make dim sum at the Super Star Seafood Restaurant in Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon. The restaurant is famous for its animal-shaped dim sum that easily win the hearts of kids and kids-at-heart. The boys, Ethan and Matthew had fun making oddly shaped dim sum which includes a merry mix of penguin, a wizard's hat and a happy face dim sum!

HI AMAZING HK RAC - The families gather for a quick kick-off ceremony at The Gateway, the courtyard of Harbour City. As soon as the clock hit midday, the horn is blown and the families raced on to the first checkpoint

TC HE AVENI OI TAR! The Sy family excitedly ran across the Avenue of Stars in Tsim Sha Tsui to figure out how many stars have the celebrity's handprints in them, even asking local authorities for help! Dad Franklin happily took a wacky photo with Jacky Chan's hand prints.



While riding the MTR, the Sy family figure out their next checkpoint – the "the recently opened world-class eco-tourist facility" only points to one direction… the Hong Kong Wetland Park at the New Territories! At the park, the family had to find out the name of the crocodile that lives in the enclosure and the one-clawed crab, the Fiddler Crab!

HE BREATHTAKING PEAK - The last and final stop had The Peak written all over it. The clues claiming "360 panoramic" and "spectacular view" all led to the same, famed Hong Kong attraction – The Peak. They then head to the famous home of the famous, Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum to find a particular wax figure with a beating heart, Andy Lau.

RAI HE INISH After a long but fun day of running around, the Sy family reached the meeting point, Santa's Town in Central, where they clocked-in and finally got to meet the Kwok's, host family for the rest of their stay.

SUNDAY, December 3, 2006

AN AI HENT UNG JN EX RIEN The two families bonded during the day, with visits to the Golden Bauhinia Square for flag raising ceremony, enjoying a Chinese-style breakfast at the Kwok residence and quality time doing some shopping while riding a double-decker bus, the tram and a ferry!

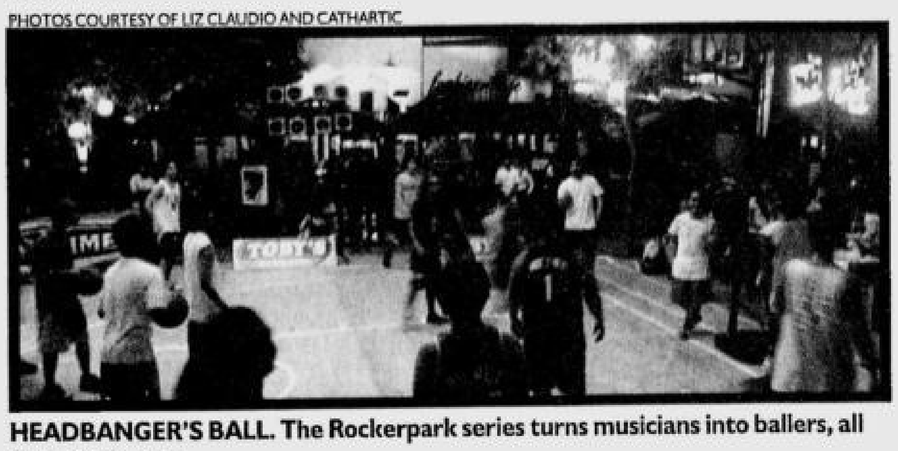
.NC .HE As the final tally was done, the Cheow Family from Singapore was named the winner of the challenge, awarded by Mr. David Leung, Hong Kong Tourism Board's Regional Director for South and Southeast Asia. The Sy family was happy for the winning family and is very thankful for the amazing experience they have been provided with as well as the rewarding bond they had formed with the Kwoks.

MONDAY, December 4, 2006

DISNE .AND MA. The Sy family spent their last day frolicking in Hong Kong Disneyland, playing around with their famous Disney Friends!

ADVT

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LIZ CLAUDIO AND CATHARTIC



HEADBANGER'S BALL. The Rockerpark series turns musicians into ballers, all for a good cause

GETTING THEIR HEADS IN THE GAME. Rivermaya's Mark Escueta and Rock Ed's Gang Badoy

Rock your playground

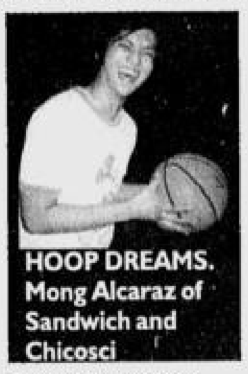
And get all emo screamo for a really, really good cause

By Gino de la Paz

ANYONE LOOKING TO SHADOW Pinoy rock heavyweights will feel like he or she has infiltrated heaven—or an extremely sweaty VIP room—at Rockerpark. Oh, lookie! Is that Yael Yuzon of Spongecola? And Mark Escueta of Rivermaya? And Pochoy Labog of Dicta License? And, like, you slamming into them like a reckless/starstruck Quasimodo? Well, possibly. And only if you show up at Rockerpark at the Eastwood Central Plaza on Monday.

A feat of pure magic by the kind folks at Rock Ed Philippines (I Am Super! '06 awardees) and Toby's Sports, the Rockerpark series turns brooding musicians into instant ballers. But more important, the awesome project turns *rakistas* into—*awww*—Care Bears. You, too, can earn those good karma points by taking part and donating new or previously owned sports equipment for public school kids across the country.

This rock star mini-Olympics kicked off last November with a 3-on-3 basketball challenge and a roll call that your P.E. teacher can only dream of. Kjwan, Chicosci, Sandwich, Greyhoundz, Twisted Halo, Pedicab, and Parokya ni Edgar were just some of the industry good guys who came out to play. Starting January 29th, 2007, Rockerpark will become a regular endor-fun-filled experience, taking place every last Monday of the month. For this second leg, excpect the likes of Radioactive Sago Project, Stonefree, Session Road, and Mayonnaise to bring their A-game.



HOOP DREAMS. Mong Alcaraz of Sandwich and Chicosci

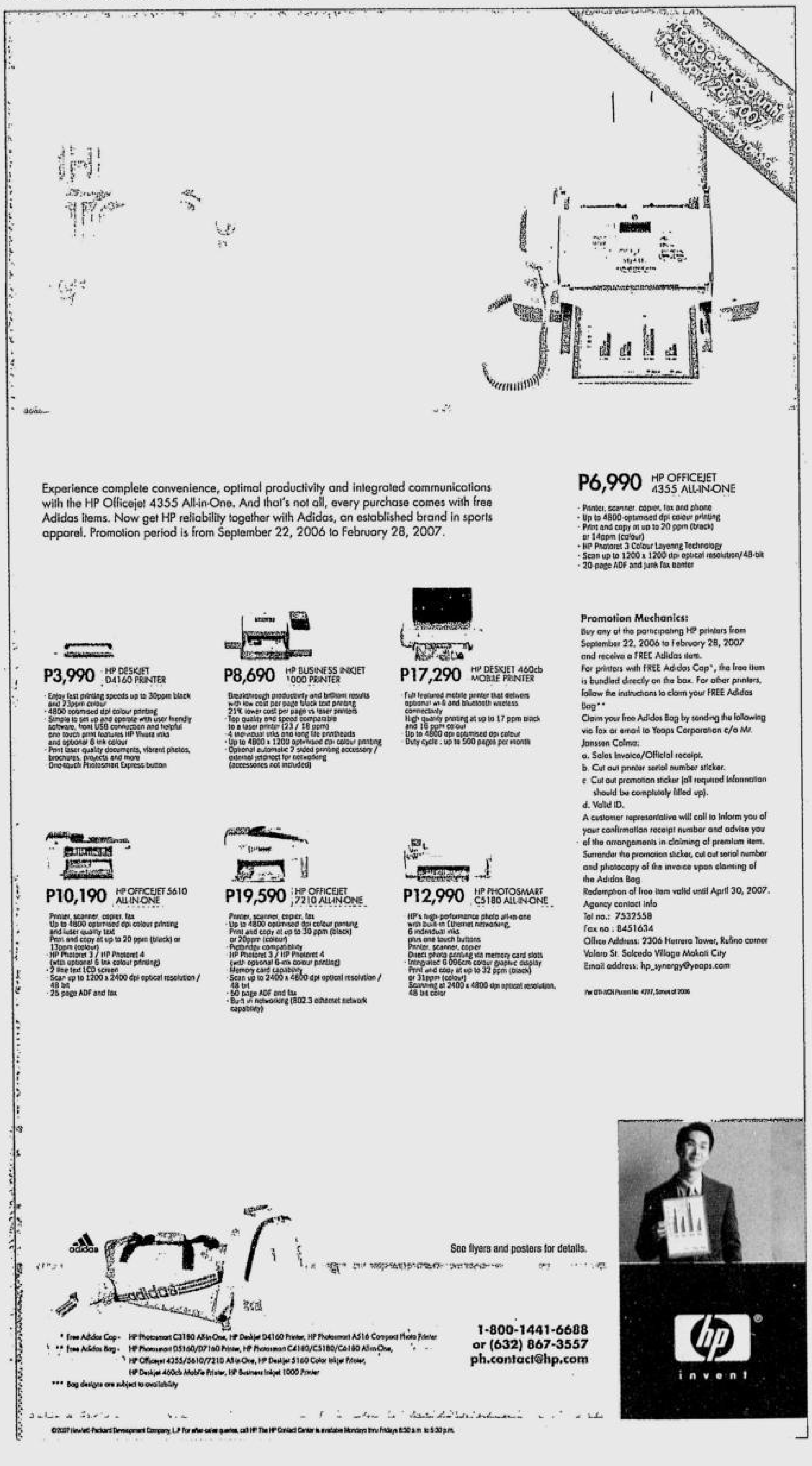
CHILLIN' IN THE PARK. Diego and Mike of Sandwich, Nix of TEN, and Vin of Twisted Halo

Rockerpark happens at the Eastwood Central Plaza at 4 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 29. Special thanks to Lifetime and Taraflex by Spurway Enterprises. For more info on Rockerpark and other Rock Ed projects, visit www.rockedphilippines.org.

Friends and benefits

SHOW your support and march on to the Eastwood Central Plaza tomorrow, Jan. 28 (a full day before Rockerpark) for "LivELY: A Fundraising Concert for the Benefit of Ely Buendia." Get your fill of Parokya ni Edgar, Kamikazee, Rivermaya, Itchyworms, Spongecola, Chicosci, UpDharmaDown, True Faith, Cynthia Alexander, Severo, and Soapdish. The lovefest starts at 4:30 p.m. so see ya then!

For more info, contact Liz Claudio at 0917-8295492.



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See flyers and posters for details.

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FUTURISTAS

> "Sometimes I dream about reality"
>
> —Manu Chao, "Mr. Bobby"

OUT THE WINDOW

Tals Diaz

IN MY FAVORITE CAFÉ IN the city, two Tarot card readers offer their divination services twice a week. Since the calendar year turned double-O seven, however, they've had more clients waiting in line than on the opening day of Krispy Kreme in Manila.

The blurry-eyed, fatigued seers worked all afternoon 'til late night, keeping up with the demand of customers seeking portents of their fate in the coming year. With five hundred pesos a pop, I actually wondered why I did not consider honing my skills in the Third Eye department.

Fate, future, luck, love, destiny—the vocabulary words of the future-obsessed, or as I'd like to call the masters and disciples of the great unknown tomorrows, the "Futuristas."

Future obsession

Two Futurista friends of mine started comparing notes on their respective *hulas* of the last year, about what came true and what failed to transpire. My gay friend shared that his new *manghuhula* was really good, because he told him that in his past life, he was Italian. "That would explain my affinity for Gucci," he said. His last *manghuhula* failed miserably, he went on, because a supposed auspicious date in last year's calendar did not produce a new lover, a winning lottery ticket, or an approved visa to the United States to watch Madonna in concert. That's why I say to keep the success rate high, it's better to give a "beforecast" rather than a bold prophecy. Great expectations run the risk of great disappointment, after all. On the other hand, you can't go wrong with past lives because people manage to find connections to their present condition. I can imagine all those girls who were told they were Cleopatra in their past lives justifying their inner diva.

So gay Futurista friend continued, "I'm also supposed to die at 50." Furrowed brows and dropping jaws ensue, until he assured us, "but I'm not worried, at least I'll be prepared!" He has about two decades left to catch Madonna in concert before his day of reckoning.

My other friend then told of her own fortune telling encounter. Having cleaned out her desk one day, she found an old sheet of paper that outlined her destiny many years ago. She was shocked to find out how those predictions had come true; she had left the country and found her success abroad, and she really did end up marrying a tall, fair-skinned foreigner. Freaky!

And what about me? Though I am a big fan of mystery and unrealism, I guess compared to a lot of my Futurista friends, I'm not as fanatical about having my destiny plotted out by a stranger. I'd wager that my reluctance started some time at the turn of the century when a palm reader told me that I was an executioner in my past life (an instant mood-killer during a date, but a convenient bit of info I use to get out of small talk situations). A few years before that forecast, in the streets of Rome, a ragged old soothsayer told me I'd be married twice, famous, and "fly fly" whatever that meant, as his English was rusty. Recently, when someone told me that he could hook me up with a woman who can reveal my animal spirit, I politely declined, for I already know that my animal guide is a bitch.

Destination: destiny

What satisfies that Futurista part of me is my fixation with Feng Shui and the Zodiac. I'm like the patient who favors a self-prescription over a doctors' diagnosis. I keep up with the headlines of my horoscope, and yes, I like being aware of those calendar dates when Mercury is in retrograde. Though my readings may not totally control my actions, I do take note of some of the more positive signs as a guide. Perhaps these are necessary illusions that propel me through the madness of randomness. I just believe that there are greater forces in the universe that see the grand design.

So why do we put ourselves at the throes of the unexplainable? Trust in faith in helping our fate? Because skepticism fails in one very crucial aspect about living—it fails to give us hope.

We like to believe we are destined for greater things. Part of the human struggle is trying to understand the mystery of our destiny. In the universe of possibilities, it is only natural for us to look up and try to read the stars, to attempt to fill in those gaps of logic, or find answers in the darker places of our minds. Sometimes, we find illumination in those crevices where the light of scientific logic is dim, perhaps because we believe that our fates rely on higher forces that act on it.

Predictions and omens should not give us reasons or excuses excuse to start acting on a goal, or to start being alive today. If a fortuneteller said you had twenty years more to live, how would you fill the infinite moment—with resignation or resolve?

What is destiny really but a destination, and it is only us who can steer ourselves towards it. Others can prophecy by saying "you will," but the time has come to say instead, "I will."

The word according to Venus

From page C1

& Tolo Bote at Temple; DJs Scratchmark & Jenna at Prince of Jaipur; Drag-on Saturdays at Bed

Jan. 28, Sunday

Peter Pan at CCP Main Theater; Hunan Food Festival at Tin Hau, Mandarin Oriental; ZsaZsa Zaturnnah: Ze Muzikal! at CCP; Jazz Sunday Brunch w/ Vince Lahorra at M Café

Jan. 29, Monday

RockEd's Rockerpark II feat. basketball, FutKal, and music at Eastwood Central Plaza (3 p.m. till midnight); Poetry with a Bite w/ Roger Robinson at British Council ; Kamikazee & Moonstar88 at Conspiracy; Happy Mondays w/ Borgy Manotoc at Embassy Cuisine; DJ RO at Gweilos Makati; Chemical Underground at Absinth

Jan. 30, Tuesday

Kate Torralba, Paramita, Cherry Cornflakes, Pumping Pluto, Triggerbliss, Cambio, and Moonstar 88 at Saguijo; Cuisine Royale w/ DJ Manolet Dario at Embassy Cuisine; Sparkle w/ DJs Erwin Edralin & Patch at Absinth; Guarana at Café Havana Greenbelt

Jan. 31, Wednesday

Up Dharma Down & Paramita at 70s Bistro; Terno Inferno w/ Swissy, Daydream Cycle, Giniling Festival, and Outerhope at Saguijo; Lush: Smooth Rn'B at Fiamma; W Wednesdays w/ DJs Karl Ty & Cao Ocampo at Embassy Cuisine; DJs Mars Miranda & Johnyverse at Embassy Club; Skyy High at Vida Malate; Mishmash w/ DJ Brando Umali at Absinth; DJ Kimozave & Chrismyx at Prince of Jaipur; DJ Brit at Government; Jazz Night at Mag:net Café ; Noel Cabangon at Conspiracy

Feb. 1, Thursday

La Luna Loca w/ Tribo Manila at Mezze; Jazz Sessions w/ Jana del Prado & Empathy at M Café; Brownman Revival at 70s Bistro; Fluxxe: Whatever Thursdays at Absinth; Worldwide Thursdays w/ Soundsgood at Nuvo; SPIT at Mag:net Café; Thirsty Thirst-days at Bed

Feb. 2, Friday

Latin Connection w/ DJs Karl Ty & Paolo Cabalfin at Piedra; Apo Hiking Society at Metro Bar; Dress Down Friday at Shangri-La Streetscape; Decadance w/ DJ Boyet Almazan at Jill's; DJ Tony Pavia at Mezze; House Sessions at Fiamma; Kiss MyHOUSE w/ DJ Elian at M Café; Soul Food w/ DJ Roam at Fig & Olive; DJ Marie Garcia at Embassy Cuisine; Jive w/ DJs Darrel & McDash at Temple; The Jerks at 70s Bistro; DJs Scratchmark & Jenna at Prince of Jaipur

Schedules may change without prior notice. For more information and a complete listing of events, text 24/7 GIGS through your mobile phone and send to 2851 (Globe) and 2951 (Smart). Log on to mag24-7.com or pick up your free copy of 24/7 NOCTURNAL NAVIGATOR at bars and restaurants around the city. Submit your schedules before Tuesday to events@mag24-7.com & mag24_7@yahoo.com.

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Why Jan Nieto has the XYZ factor

JAN contemplates his musical future with focused optimism.

By Ria Valencia Ferro

DEC. 9, 2006, ARANETA COLISEUM, "Philippine Idol" finals:

The stage is dim. The sleek silhouette of a young man dressed in a dark suit steps onto the edge of the stage. A mammoth roar emanates from a crowd of thousands. They chant "Jan Nieto! Jan Nieto!" The young man straightens up, faces the audience, and lights up with an incandescent smile. The crowd roars again. That perfect moment, Jan Nieto, the improbable, unmistakable star, is born.

Improbable star

An improbable star because, just eight months before, Jan was climbing the corporate ladder. Jan dreamed of joining singing contests, but could not qualify because of his age. He longed to become a singer, but kept this secret from his family of successful professionals.

His parents are both medical doctors, and his five older siblings are in various distinguished occupations. His mother, Ethelyn Pasion Nieto, is the current undersecretary of the Department of Health. When Jan learned of "Philippine Idol" early 2006 and found that he could make the age requirement, he took the chance to pursue his dream.

To succeed in "Philippine Idol," one needs to have the attitude and stamina not just to deliver the goods in terms of great performances week after week, but also to withstand the pressure of hectic schedules, intrigue, criticism and personal issues. Jan Nieto's feat is particularly remarkable when one considers his competition:

Gian Magdangal is a tall, Eurasian looker, an experienced theater and band performer. Mau Marcelo is an experienced band singer, and "professional" singing contestant, having joined many contests. Jan had zero professional experience, no formal voice training, and could not read notes.

Passion

Fast-forward to Dec. 9, and Jan Nieto delivers the first of the three strongest performances of the evening, soaring levels higher in energy, passion, and delivery—and on this most critical night, trouncing his competitors. With one exception: Mau Marcelo's nerve-tingling performance "On My Own," which justifiably clinched for her the first Philippine Idol title.

Jan Nieto wove his own spell over the audience that night, silencing all naysayers. Jan had previously received criticism of how his performances were stiff, inorganic, or not note-perfect. This night, all of Jan's songs were musically flawless, and his movements flowed intuitively. Beyond that, Jan was poignant, eloquent, masterful, buoyant. Full of magnetic masculine appeal, Jan's uninhibited yet elegant performances rivaled the charm and electricity of a Gary V. or Martin Nievera.

How did he do it?

Family of supporters

One would have to take a look at his family, beginning with maternal grandmother, Felicitas Pasion, a former schoolteacher. He calls her his first mentor, the one who taught him all the important things in life, including the value of punctuality, trustworthiness, eating right, among others. One of Jan's greatest regrets is his not being able to express his gratitude to his *Lola* before she passed away in her sleep two years ago.

Jan's father, from whom Jan inherited a love for singing, volunteered to find CDs of songs his son needed to study. If Jan mentioned he needed a costume in a certain color, lawyer Kit Nieto, Jan's brother and first voice coach, would arrange to have it ready by the time Jan got home.

Jan credits his siblings with being devoted to help fulfill his dream by assisting with logistics and finances. His mother, who was a constant presence during elimination shows, was so emotionally involved that she chose to watch the finals at home "*kasi hindi niya kaya.*"

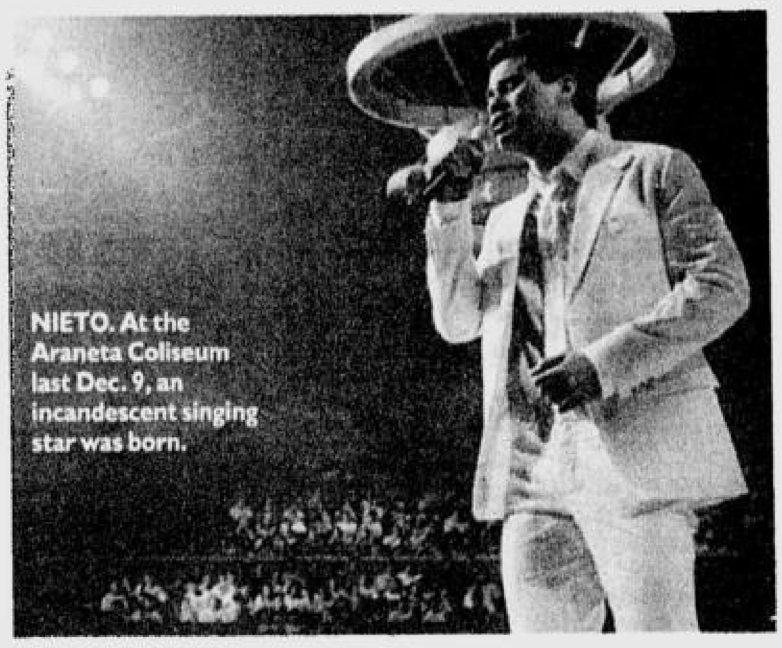
Stunning improvement

Perhaps by osmosis, Jan is disciplined, hardworking, unfailingly punctual, consistent, focused, sober, clear-thinking. Jan achieved the stunning improvement of his craft, "from 0 to 100" as Judge Ryan Cayabyab put it, within a very short period by rigorously applying a systematic process. He analyzed every aspect of the competition, mulled over his strengths and weaknesses based on judges' comments, formulated strategy, set specific goals and followed through on those goals.

Sounds simple, but this process requires discipline and very clear, aware thinking. Jan's BS in management engineering degree from the Ateneo may have helped him sift through the chaff.

Jan, while being very low-key about it, was known for acts of compassion among his fellow contestants. On the results night when four finalists would be pared down to three, the audience could see Jan hugging, comforting, whispering to Mau who had started to cry as she stood with him in the hot spot, unmindful that he could be on the

WHY/ D2



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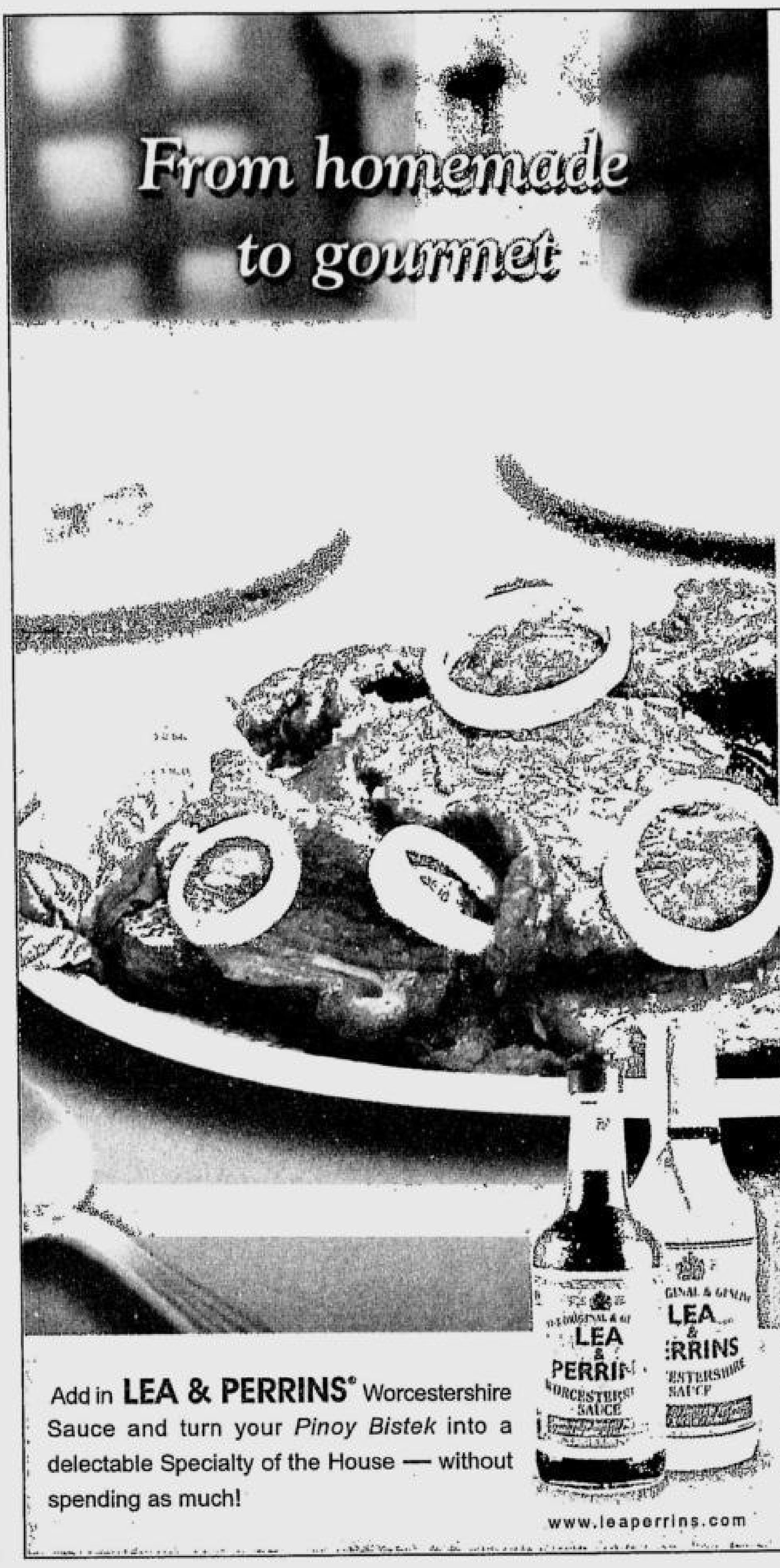

Melt-in-your-Mouth Pinoy Bistek

Serves 4
Preparation time: 30 mins.
Cooking time: 30 mins

Ingredients:
500 grams beef sirloin (with some fat), cut into beef steak slices and pounded
4 Tbsp flour
½ cup soy sauce
½ cup lemon/calamansi juice
1 Tbsp **LEA & PERRINS** Worcestershire Sauce
1 Tbsp freshly ground black pepper
2 potatoes cut into ¼ inch discs
2 onions sliced into thin rounds
6 Tbsp cooking oil

Procedure:
1. Mix soy sauce, lemon juice, **LEA & PERRINS** Worcestershire Sauce and black pepper in a large bowl.
2. Marinate beef slices in soy mixture for 30 minutes then drain, reserving the marinade. Lightly dredge beef slices in flour.
3. In medium hot oil, sear beef slices a few slices at a time for 30 seconds each side and set aside.
4. Pour off half the oil in the searing pan and sauté onions for a few seconds. Add in the potato slices and pour reserved marinade plus water and simmer for 20 minutes or till potato slices are soft.
5. Place beef slices back to the sauce and let simmer for 5 minutes more.
6. Serve immediately.

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Why Jan Nieto has the XYZ factor

From page D1

chopping block himself.

Great guy

Sandra Chavez, president of I-Asia management company, the artist manager appointed by Fremantlemedia to manage the career of the top three winners of "Philippine Idol" observes," I'm finding out Jan is a great guy. He loves his family, he's *magalang*—I'm starting to really like the guy."

TV and stage director Freddie Santos says Jan definitely has the "XYZ" Factor: "X means sex appeal, Y means the reasons for Jan's stardom are clear in terms of his talent and abilities, and Z means Jan is trustworthy enough to take home with you. If I were Mother Lily, I'd sign him up, asap!"

'Kilig' factor

Sandra Chavez agrees: 'Jan is wow, *guwapo! Grabe!* Forgive the *kababawan*, but Jan has a huge *kilig* factor with women. He gets up on stage and the women scream his name!"

Jan still seems bewildered at all the attention from the ladies. He insists, "Girls have never been attracted to me before! Even now I don't consider myself a babe magnet."

In fact, Jan has tremendous presence on stage, with a model's physique, and classic, handsome Filipino features, dark deep-set eyes, earthy brown skin, chiseled jaw and a disarming dimpled smile.

Concert

Chavez, the manager instrumental in the careers of music icons such as Kuh Ledesma, Gary Valenciano, Zsa Zsa Padilla, and Sharon Cuneta, hasn't lost any time building Jan's budding career. She is in the midst of firming up an album deal and endorsement deals for Jan.

ALL credit goes to *Lola* Felicitas Pasion, says Jan.

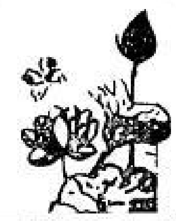
Jan will be performing in the "Final 12" "Philippine Idol" concert on March 23 at the Araneta Coliseum.

Chavez enthuses: 'Jan Nieto was the biggest surprise on 'Philippine Idol.' He really soared in the competition. The essence of Jan is that he is a very good singer . . I'm very excited to manage him!"

To view videos of exclusive interviews of Jan Nieto, go to www.philippine idol.com.

Finding solace from pain

LOTUS POND



R. Valencia and S. Bismark

WHEN WE EXPERIENCE PHYSICAL PAIN, consider these thoughts:

1. Pain and material pleasures have a beginning and an end. They don't last forever. The human body is temporary, but his soul is eternal.

2. The law of karma says: We reap what we sow. We shouldn't blame God or the world for our actions. We always pay our dues.

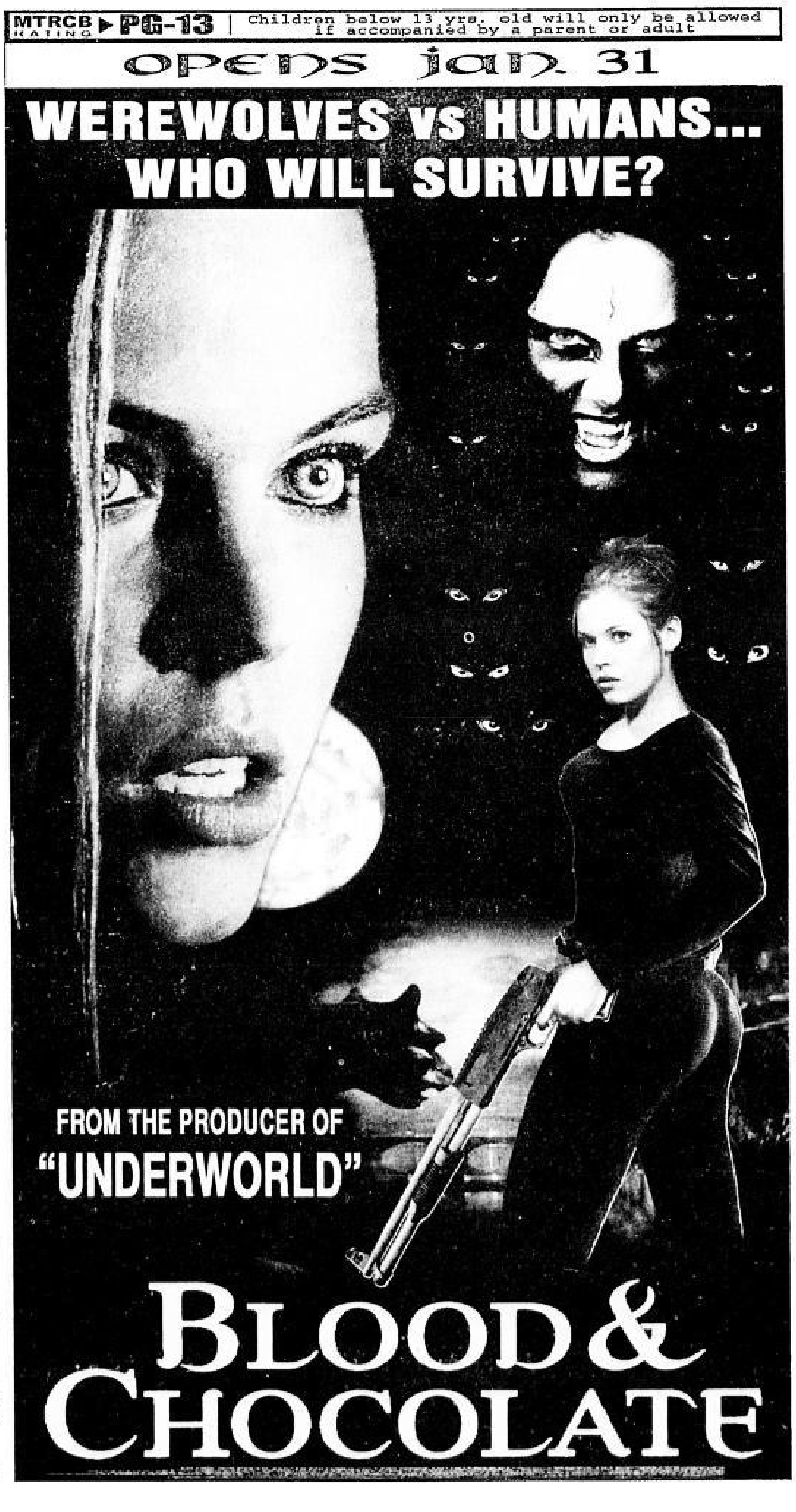
3. Life is precious. The goal is to achieve self-realization. Even when bedridden, a person can meditate, pray, engage in spiritual discussions, and chant the names of the Supreme Being. Spiritual progress is possible even when physically disabled.

Heartfelt service

4. Learn to use what's available. If your feet are useless, use your hands. If the body is paralyzed, utilize the mind. Use what you have to serve the Supreme Being, and He will accept your heartfelt service. He doesn't look at the quantity of work that you do, but at the loving devotion that goes with each offering. Please Him, and your life will become perfect. You'll find no greater achievement or better happiness in life.

5. Don't dwell on the pain. It will always be there. Focus instead on transcendence—it goes beyond all forms of pain and misery.

6. Offer your sacrifices to the Supreme Being as you find solace at His feet—and your heart will find peace and tranquility!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NOW SHOWING

Pitt paces 'Babel's' awards-worthy cast

By Rito P. Asilo

"Babel"

D: Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu

S: Brad Pitt, Cate Blanchett, Gael Garcia Bernal

USING THE BIBLICAL METAphor of the Tower of Babel to examine the cause and effect of human action, Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu ("Amores Perros") brilliantly weaves a disturbingly provocative drama about an innocent shooting incident in the Moroccan desert.

A stray bullet hits American tourist, Susan (Cate Blanchett), who's on a holiday in the African continent with husband, Richard (Brad Pitt) as a desperate move to save a marriage on the rocks.

BLANCHETT AND PITT. Play tourists who find tragedy in the Moroccan desert.

The reckless actions of goatherds, Ahmed and Yussef, who pulled the trigger by accident, are perceived by local authorities as a premeditated terrorist attack that sets off a series of events that ripples around the globe.

Interlocked in the socio-political frenzy that results from the shooting are the stories of Mexican Amelia (Adriana Barraza), the nanny of Richard and Susan's kids, and Japanese teenager, Chieko (Rinko Kikuchi), the deaf-mute daughter of the man who gave the contentious rifle to Ahmed and Yussef's father, Abdullah, as an act of kindness.

After her employers refuse to give her the day-off, Amelia, along with reckless nephew, Santiago (Gael Garcia Bernal), defiantly takes her wards on a trip across the Mexican border for the wedding of her son.

Brisk editing, sparkling photography and a first-rate script add power and dramatic punch to the brilliant director's production.

Pitt paces an awards-worthy cast, with Bernal, Kikuchi and Barraza delivering searing performances (the last two have Oscar nominations to show for them).

Inarritu fills his sumptuous story with thought-provoking existential musings and a scathing commentary about race and politics that is as timely as today's headlines.

Focus on 'freaks' deplored

By Nestor U. Torre

THROUGH THE YEARS, "American Idol" has "entertained" viewers, not just with superlative singing, but with its complete opposite—the worst musical non-talents murdering songs with outrageous gumption.

Most of the non-talents were good only for the moment's snorting laugh, but William Hung parlayed his total lack of musical talent into a show biz career.

Laughing stock

While most viewers thought the "freaks" on "American Idol" were freakily funny, however, I found them quite pathetic. I didn't like the way the show was subliminally encouraging them to do their worst, so they would become the laughing stock of the viewing public.

Was I acting like an excessively scrupulous and punctilious party pooper? For years, it looked that way—but this season, other voices have finally been raised against the tilt's inordinate fixation on "freaks" for "entertainment's" sake.

Some days ago, on "The View," co-host Rosie O'Donnell zeroed in on "American Idol." Soon after, Oprah Winfrey asked Simon Cowell why obvious non-talents were given so much sardonic exposure on the show.

Other observers rued the fact that viewers particularly enjoyed seeing lousy singers making such fools of themselves during auditions.

An NBC executive quickly retorted that contestants *weren't* being encouraged to be bad, and the show in fact had a mechanism that eliminated contestants who were coming up with artificially bad performances just so they could get more exposure on TV.

Whatever the follow-up reaction, it's good that the issue is finally being ventilated in the media, so the worsening situation can be rationalized and rectified.

Human nature

It's true that features on non-talents say something about human nature, misplaced ambition and lack of shame, etc. But, these potentially instructive points are overwhelmed by the cheap laughs and a similarly misplaced feeling of smug superiority engendered in viewers.

Has the criticism against "American Idol's" rough treatment of no-talent auditionees had a positive effect on how the competition is being handled? It looks like it. Simon Cowell looked chastened when Oprah Winfrey raised huffy questions about the insults hurled at some prospective contestants this year.

Scathing remarks

More to the point, when we tuned in to the search on Star World last Wednesday, the negative comments the jurors made were less offensive than their scathing remarks the week before.

It looks like even the arch, sniffy and snitty likes of Cowell and company know when to bow to the rising tsunami wave of negative public opinion.

It's true that an NBC executive has persisted in defending the show's bitchiness and focus on freaky no-talents, claiming that the show is viewed and enjoyed precisely for those "colorful" elements. But he, too, may eventually change his tune if the tsk-tsk tsunami continues to gain strength.

Lessons from the great Eddie Garcia

By Ronald Mangubat

IT HAPPENED TWO YEARS AGO, but my first immersion in film production will always be memorable because of the privilege of working with the great Eddie Garcia

I was the line producer of the Cinemalaya entry, "ICU Bed # 7," Rica Arevalo's first directorial effort based on her Palanca award-winning screenplay and an entry in the Cinemalaya film festival.

We had already finalized negotiations with most of our cast, but we still didn't have an actor to play the lead character, *Lolo* Joseph, the stubborn patriarch whose illness opens old wounds in the family. But, the cathartic experience eventually leads to dramatic healing.

First time

I remember how my voice cracked the first time I spoke with Mr. Garcia on the phone.

The man has a strong presence, and I'm not only referring to his screen performances. Face to face, he can easily draw attention even without saying a word. This rattled all of us on our first shooting day.

GARCIA. Perfectionist.

If there was one thing he taught us, it was the value of professionalism. Through Garcia's actions, he clearly imparted this message: Love your job, work hard, and take it seriously.

At our preproduction meeting, he demanded an oral line reading for the cast—from the first to the last. And it wasn't just the dialogue the cast read—it included even the sequence numbers, scene description and the screenwriter's instructions!

Details

Days before the first shooting day, he continuously called me (even in the middle of the night) to ask about production details—costumes, props, questions about some of his lines.

Katrina Villa, our production designer whom he requested to visit his house to take a look at his clothes, was so amazed at how organized Garcia was. She said all of his shirts, trousers, shoes and hats were neatly arranged—with corresponding labels!

A day prior to our first shooting day, Garcia didn't settle for the exact address of the location shoot. He requested me to fax a road sketch, complete with landmarks so that he wouldn't get lost. During the entire shoot, he would notice small details and make suggestions.

But, his suggestions were made nicely. In fact, the guy never complained! He ate his meals in a styrofore box just like everyone else. He would even crack jokes when the cast and crew were feeling sleepy.

Glimpse

I got a glimpse of the real Eddie Garcia when, during a 30-minute break, as I was busy computing our production expenses, he approached me, pointed to the big couch I was sitting on, and asked: "May I sit here beside you?"

That was the day FPJ died, and that initiated our long conversation. I asked him what exactly happened in that party where FPJ suffered a massive stroke, and Garcia narrated everything in detail.

Then, our conversation shifted to the FPJ movies he had appeared in, and I remember Garcia mouthing his lines from some of those starrers!

He told me how he likes working with young people—especially those who are into digital films, because not only do they offer fresh ideas, they are also very driven.

Last shooting day

On our last shooting day, just before we packed up, I interviewed the cast (including Irma Adlawan, Angel Aquino and Noni Buencamino) and asked them how it felt to work with *Tito* Eddie.

As Adlawan was expressing how thrilled she was performing with the great actor, I saw from the corner of my eye how Garcia slowly moved away from the set, not wanting to hear the compliments heaped on him. Such humility moved all of us.

Thank you for the experience and the inspiration, *Tito* Eddie! It was an honor to have worked with you.

Catch Eddie Garcia's award-winning performance in "ICU Bed # 7" from Jan. 31 to Feb. 6 at the Robinson's Galleria's IndieSine. The film also won for Arevalo the best director trophy at the first Cinemalaya film festival.

It's all in the family

By Behn Cervantes

LON CHANEY WAS AN ICON OF American cinema. Often called "The Man with a Thousand Faces," he starred in memorable films where his expertise with cinematic make-up transformed him from the "Phantom of the Opera" to Quasimodo in "The Hunchback of Notre Dame."

The son of deaf-mute parents, Chaney's talent in mime and screen make-up earned him a niche among the greatest stars of the silent film era.

Charismatic

For his part, John Barrymore was known as The Great Profile. He, his brother Lionel and sister Ethel made a handsome trio. John was a charismatic actor, but he was an alcoholic who wasted his good looks, talent and stature in Hollywood. After he passed away, his equally talented daughter, Diana, made an impressive film debut, but likewise took to the bottle.

It seemed that the Barrymores were cursed by a family flaw—until John Junior's daughter, Drew, debuted successfully in Steven Spielberg's "E.T." A delightfully talented tot with Shirley Temple's charm, she was an incandescent presence on the big screen. However, by the time she was in her teens, she had also gravitated to alcohol, sex and drugs—the same vices that had ruined the careers of her grandfather, father and aunt!

Fortunately, Drew got her act together and came back in a big way. Not only did the teenage market sympathize with her, but producers and directors also cast her in box-office bonanzas. The once-troubled teenager so ably reined in her life and career that she soon started producing her own films. She has become one of Hollywood's most bankable stars, and broke the hex that seemed to have hounded her talented family.

Jon Voight's luminous presence and blond, good looks contrasted with the dark character played by Dustin Hoffman in "Midnight Cowboy." In the '60s, Voight was cast in good films like "Catch-22" and acted alongside screen luminaries like Jane Fonda.

In the '80s, he had become a fixture in prestigious films that cast him in notable character roles.

Problematic

Enter his seemingly problematic but drop-dead gorgeous daughter named Angelina Jolie, who followed Voight's footsteps.

Dubbed Tinseltown's Bad Girl, she immediately became tabloid staple because of her strange behavior. But, like Drew, she handled her career so well that even her controversial marriage to Billy Bob Thornton and their subsequent divorce only added to her charisma. She later garnered a best supporting actress Oscar.

BARRYMORE. Has her famous family's gifts—and flaws.

Jolie's scandalous personal life apparently improved her box-office magic.

The artistic genes may have helped, but Jane, Drew and Angelina succeeded on their own terms. They continue to add prestige to their forebears' legendary names.

Pinoy indies find a home

By Rica Arevalo

INDIESINE, THE HOME OF LOcal alternative films, had a "mainstream" launching last Jan. 16, complete with sumptuous buffet, an *a la* "Stomp" dance number by the Hotlegs, and live performance from Up Dharma Down at Robinson's Galleria.

The program, hosted by Angel Aquino and Rustom Padilla, was presented like a traditional, show biz awards night—its extravagance proving that the indies have indeed arrived. All night, actors, directors and film workers were in a surreal, "pinch-me" mood, because their dream of having a permanent home had finally come true.

So excited

Even Padilla got excited hosting the event. He made us laugh when he mistakenly used the word "multimedia" instead of "multitalented" to describe one filmmaker. Good thing Angel corrected him.

The highlight of the event was the distribution of the First Daluyan Awards by the Philippine Independent Filmmakers' Multi-Purpose Cooperative (IFC) to Tikoy Aguiluz, Ed Cabagnot, Nick Deocampo, Mario O'Hara, Rox Lee, Mike de Leon, Virgie Moreno, Ben Pinga, Raymond Red, Surf Reyes and Kidlat Tahimik. Yul Servo and Jaclyn Jose presented them with trophies designed by Aba Lluch Dalena.

Moreno moved us when she shared her award with our deceased National Artists. She said: "I would like to step aside to let the shadows of the greats be made known. I remember those who are not here: Bernal, Avellana, Brocka. They all belong here."

Change

Red recalled that, 20 years ago, organizers of the defunct Wave Film Festival also gave out awards to young, independent filmmakers. Now, he says, events have come full circle: "We are seeing change. We have not retired. We are picking up new weapons."

Call 433-1121, or e-mail Marge Templo at ifcoop@yahoogroups.com.

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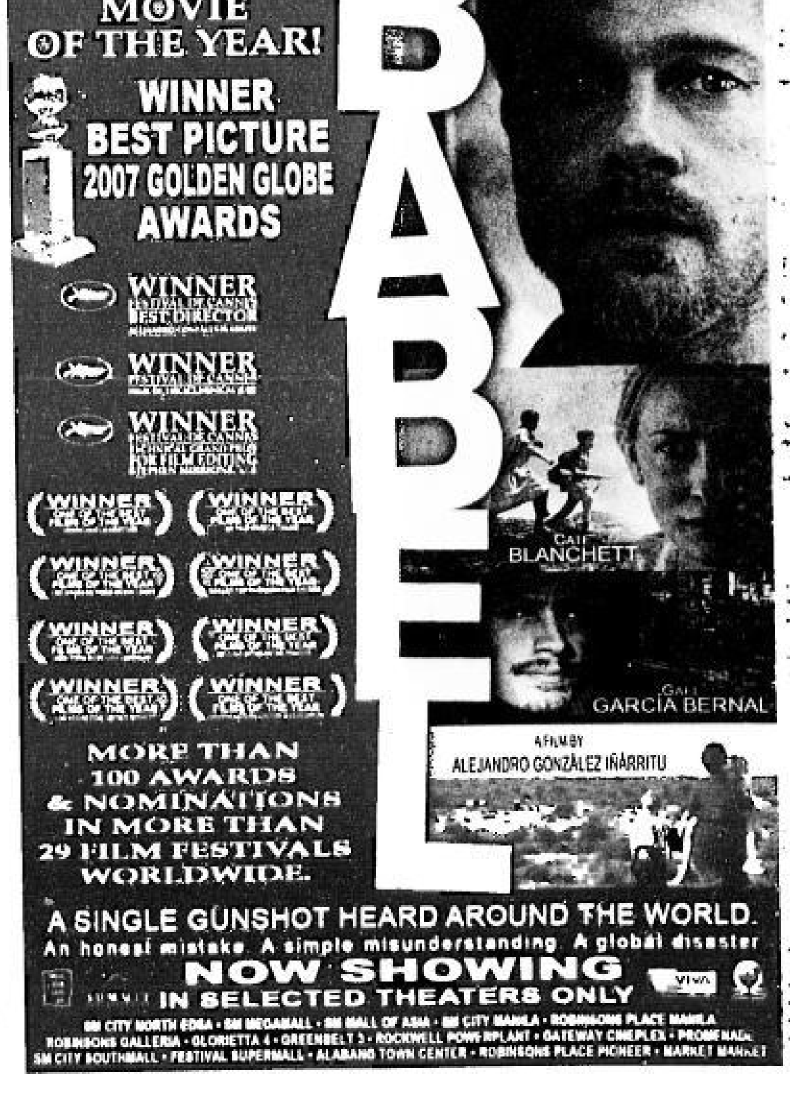
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VIVA

Auspicious start for IndieSine

By Rito P. Asilo

THERE'S GOOD REASON FOR the local film artists' celebratory mood these days. Last week, the Philippine Independent Filmmakers' Multi-Purpose Cooperative (IFC) and Robinson's Galleria formally launched IndieSine, the popular mall's theater venue that caters to the country's burgeoning indie film market.

This new development augurs well for the industry's new breed of brave, bold and passionate filmmakers, as well as for movie *aficionados* who crave for an alternative to mainstream's formulaic offerings. Finally, the *Pinoy* indie has a home to call its own!

CASTILLO. His performance is "Pepot Artista's" best asset.

Potboilers

So, if you refuse to be dumbed down by the usual comedy-horror potboilers that have been filling the screens of late, go to IndieSine and patronize the films that our new filmmakers have been cooking up outside mainstream's facile cinematic fast-food joint.

We had to rearrange our schedule for a chance to finally watch Doy del Mundo's "Pepot Artista," which won the best picture prize at the first Cinemalaya festival two years ago, and we were glad we did.

Despite an occasionally languorous pace, Del Mundo's first feature is a heartwarming tale about a boy who escapes his seemingly mundane, poverty-stricken life by daydreaming about becoming an actor. The bittersweet finale is a scene that inspires as much as it touches.

Del Mundo's story is further boosted by its penchant for show biz nostalgia (the Guy and Pip references, particularly) and by the winsome performance of Singapore film fest best actor winner, Elijah Castillo.

Question

Upon Paolo Villaluna's ("Ilusyon") invitation, we also caught Jon and Carol Red's novel collaborative idea, "Imahe Nasyon," a series of 20 shorts that dare to answer the question, "What happened after 1986?," featuring the varying directorial styles of 20 filmmakers.

While not all of its portions work, its allegorical scenes nevertheless drip with the irony of the political tumult and moral decay that followed the bloodless revolution.

The shorts collectively fuse into a cohesive form that delivers a cinematic metaphor depicting the struggles of local indie cinema. In "Imahe Nasyon," the sum is greater than its parts.

Our top picks: Raymond Red's "Mistulang Kamera Obskura," Neil Daza's "Biyaheng Edsa," Villaluna's "One Shot," Mes de Guzman's "Tsinelas," Emman dela Cruz's "Imagining Edsa," EJ Salcedo's "Talahib," Tad Ermitano's "Local Unit," and Lav Diaz's "Nang Matapos ang Ulan."

Festival

Following the current Agos film festival, don't fail to watch Eddie Garcia's award-winning turn in Rica Arevalo's "ICU Bed #7," which starts its week-long run on Jan. 30.

Among the must-see movies to be shown until Jan. 29, don't miss these titles: On Jan. 27, Ditsi Carolino's "Riles" at 11 a.m.; Mario O'Hara's "Babae sa Breakwater" at 4 p.m.; Jeffrey Jeturian's "Kubrador" at 6:30 p.m., and Ron Bryant's "Rotonda" at 9 p.m.

On Jan . 28, Ellen Ongkeko-Marfil's "Mga Pusang Gala" at 1:30 p.m. and "Pepot Artista" at 6:30 p.m. On Jan. 29, Dennis Marasigan's "Sa North Diversion Road" at 1:30 p.m. and Brillante Mendoza's "Masahista" at 9 p.m. On Jan. 30, Emman dela Cruz's "Sarong Banggi" at 1:30 p.m. and Mendoza's "Manoro" at 4 p.m.

FORUM

Movies viewers want to see

By Noelani Torre

WE ASKED VIEWERS TO SHARE their thoughts on what movies they want to see this year:

"*Sana, mas maraming* regional films *ang ipapalabas* this year. *Gaya ng* 'Panaghoy sa Suba' *ni* Cesar Montano, *talagang pina-nindigan ng pelikula ang pagiging* Bisaya *niya. Tuloy, ang ganda panoorin.* Tagalog isn't the only language in the country, and Manila's culture isn't the only one we have. *Gusto kong makakita ng iba't-ibang tao at kultura.*"—*Catherine Lim, 25, graduate student*

MONTANO. Proud of his roots.

Trend

"I want to see fantasy because it's the trend nowadays. But, I'd also like to see the use of modern gadgets and technology that will make movies more interesting to watch."—*Vlademer Urbina, 23, elementary school teacher*

"*Gusto ko* heavy drama, but something realistic. I also want to see 'Frankenstein'-type of movies, comedies, and love stories with not-so-happy endings."—*Tita Romero, 50, businesswoman*

"I want to see socially relevant films with stories that promote the good values of the Filipino family."—*Ian Jules Moscoso, 34, teacher/film producer*

"*Gusto kong bumalik ang* true-to-life crime dramas—rape, murder, massacre—*gaya ng mga pelikulang ginawa dati nina* Kris Aquino *at* Vilma Santos like "The Vizconde Massacre" and "Dolzura Cortez," *'yung may mga kadiring* subtitle *gaya ng* "Lord, have mercy!" at "Heaven, help me!"—*Michael Salinas, 24, engineer*

Heroes

"I want to see historical movies depicting the lives of local heroes. These films could focus on patriotism, bravery, courage and other traits that embody the Filipino spirit. At this point, when we all seem so divided, this type of film will be a breath of fresh air. They will also be a unifying factor for all of us."—*Oscar Yalong, 28, team manager*

"I'd like to see stories that depict the realities of life."—*Efraim Bermijo, 50, accountant*

"I want to see films that are not formulaic, are nontraditional, and have interesting plots. *'Yung tipong puwedeng pag-usapan pagkatapos mapanood. 'Yung masisiyahan kang isulat para sa* reaction paper. The usual films are boring and very commercial. These days, *kung gusto mong makapanood ng magandang Pinoy* film, *manood ka ng* indies."—*Stephen Marasigan, 21, college student*

Dreams

"Films that would inspire people to keep reaching for their dreams. I'd like to see more animated movies. I want to watch movies that make sense, not merely because the producers' only intention is to make money."—*Maria Thirza Ojas, 29, guidance counselor*

"I want movies that show good moral values. They should display the good traits of our culture. These days, a lot of women are depicted in a very vulgar manner. Sure, the reason could be artistic, but we should also see to it that we don't forget to showcase the best of what we have."—*Edna Agkis, 50, high school teacher*

Elegant, homey designs

STREET SMART

Mandy Navasero

NOTED INTERIOR DESIGNER Pinky Cruz-Peralta wants to make homeowners know that there's a solution to the storage problems in their residential units. She is also into light design.

Pinky's works display the interplay of form, texture and composition. She believes that a homeowner should have access to a good quality of life regardless of the availability of space.

Model unit

When Peachy Prieto saw her design for a model unit in Antipolo, she was flown to Paris to create an elegant but homey apartment for Peachy's daughter Bianca.

Recently, Pinky and hubby Ari put up The Room Upstairs at the LRI Business Plaza. It's a café that also includes a showroom.

For LRI's third anniversary, Pinky and architect Alice Erfe are teaming up to design furniture and home furnishings at the ground floor of LRI, 210 N. Garcia (formerly Reposo), Bel Air II, Makati City.

* * *

Meanwhile, the Bankamerican community is informed that Irene de Hitta, 59, was cremated last Jan. 25. Her ashes will be brought home to Naga. She is best remembered for her mild-mannered, elegant demeanor. For those who wish to contribute to her scholarship program, please make a deposit under Evelyn de Hitta-Munoz's name at China Bank C/A 123 026 9212, Santa Elena branch.

* * *

Join the Mandy Navasero Batanes Photo Safari this summer (in cooperation with Asian Spirit and the Batanes Seaside Lodge and Resto). Starting today, you can view my photo exhibit, "My Batanes," a collection of 20 amazing photographs, at the 2nd floor of the LRI Business Plaza.

PERALTA AND ERFE. Good furniture.

E-mail mandynavasero@yahoo.com.ph, or call 899-1767.

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G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 ERAGON	2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	3 BABEL	4 AGENT X44			
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 BABEL	2 DÉJÀ VU	3 THX NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS	4 INNOCENT VOICES	5 STRANGER THAN FICTION	6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	7 LITTLE CHILDREN
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 BABEL	2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM					
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX BABEL GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS	3 STRANGER THAN FICTION GUARANTEED SEATS	4 LITTLE CHILDREN GUARANTEED SEATS	5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS		
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS	2 BABEL	3 LITTLE CHILDREN	4 AGENT X44	5 DÉJÀ VU		
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	2 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS	3 ERAGON	4 AGENT X44			
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	2 LITTLE CHILDREN	3 DÉJÀ VU	4 AGENT X44	5 BABEL		

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★★★★

"BRILLIANT!"
--- Shawn Edward / FOX-TV

Will Ferrell
Stranger than Fiction

Emma Thompson
Dustin Hoffman
Maggie Gyllenhaal
Queen Latifah

MTRCB Rating: Parental Guidance 13 (PG-13)

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glorietta GREENBELT TOWN MARKET! MARKET!

WINSLET. Brilliant.

Disturbing images in 'Children'

By Noelani Torre

NOT ALL THE CHILdren in "Little Children" are small. In this compelling set-in-suburbia drama, parents of toddlers reveal themselves to be not much older than their offspring. Underneath their adult facades, they turn out to be equally as unformed and undeveloped—and in need of growth.

Directed by Todd Field, the movie fixes an ironic eye on the upper-middle-class suburban lifestyle of young, ambitious families.

Idyllic

It begins with a scene showing the return of a convicted sex offender to a seemingly idyllic neighborhood.

Posters with his face on it are put up everywhere as people react with outrage at the presence of this declared pervert near their children.

However, Ronnie (Jackie Earle Haley), who got sentenced for exposing himself to a minor, isn't the only outsider in this rigid little community.

There's also Sarah (Kate Winslet), a dissatisfied young mother who's married to an Internet porn-loving older husband. She feels herself to be above the petty tyrannies and secret malice of the other suburban housewives, but at the same time, she castigates herself for not being as competent in the mothering department as they are.

Then, there's Brad (Patrick Wilson), a handsome stay-at-home husband who sends the other mothers in a tizzy when he strolls with his son in the playground. Married to a documentary filmmaker (Jennifer Connelly) and supposedly studying for the bar (which he has already flunked twice), Brad feels directionless and unmanned.

When Brad and Sarah meet on the playground for the first time, you just know that it won't be long before they embark on an affair.

Anxiety

Winslet is brilliant as the frustrated Sarah, who feels trapped in a life she had not imagined herself living. She communicates her character's anxiety very well.

The just as gorgeous Wilson, on the other hand, is harder to pin down. He seems bland, but then, his character *really* seems to be that way. So, it's hard to tell if he's doing any acting or not.

In any case, he doesn't match Winslet's intensity, nor Haley's, whose creepy, skin-stretched-over-skull Ronnie is someone you fear and loath, but who ultimately gains your sympathy.

The movie, despite a rambling plot and some dragging moments, resonates with disturbing images that not only command your attention, but also make you think.

---

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3 BABEL
4 AGENT X44
5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
6 ERAGON
PREMIERE CINEMA
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CENTERSTAGE
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
THE PODIUM
CINEMA 1
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CINEMA 2
BABEL
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1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 BABEL
5 DEJA VU
6 BABEL
7 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
8 AGENT X44
9 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES
10 ROB-B-HOOD
11 ERAGON
12 BLOOD DIAMOND

SM MEGACINEMA 633-1901
1 BABEL
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 ERAGON
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
5 AGENT X44
6 DEJA VU
7 BLOOD DIAMOND
8 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES
9 AGENT X44
10 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
11 ROB-B-HOOD
12 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 935-0749
1 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES
2 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 DEJA VU
5 ERAGON
6 AGENT X44
7 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
8 ROB-B-HOOD
9 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
10 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
11 BLOOD DIAMOND
12 AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH

SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 ERAGON
3 AGENT X44
4 GRIDIRON GANG
5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
6 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
7 DEJA VU
8 ROB-B-HOOD
9 BLOOD DIAMOND
10 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES

SM CITY SAN LAZARO 786-2488
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 DEJA VU
3 ERAGON
4 ROB-B-HOOD
5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
6 AGENT X44

SM SOUTHMALL 806-6888
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 AGENT X44
3 DEJA VU
4 BABEL
5 ERAGON
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
7 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES
8 ROB-B-HOOD
9 BLOOD DIAMOND

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1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
3 AGENT X44
4 ERAGON

SM CITY MANILA 523-9240
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 DEJA VU
3 BABEL
4 ERAGON
5 ROB-B-HOOD
6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
7 AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH
8 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES
9 AGENT X44
10 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
11 BLOOD DIAMOND
12 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX

SM CITY DASMARINAS (046)4123201-04
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 DEJA VU
3 AGENT X44
4 SPIRIT TRAP

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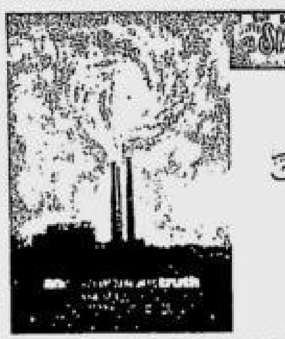
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 ERAGON
3 AGENT X44
4 DEJA VU

SM CITY SUCAT 829-4975
1 ERAGON
2 AGENT X44
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX



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2 ERAGON
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 DEJA VU
6 AGENT X44
7 ROB-B-HOOD
8 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES

SM CITY CLARK (045)625-5844-45
1 DEJA VU
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 A GOOD YEAR
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 AGENT X44
6 TANECIOUS D

SM CITY MARILAO (044)9332013-17
1 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES
2 AGENT X44
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8

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1 A GOOD YEAR
2 AGENT X44
3 BLOOD DIAMOND
4 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX

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1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 A GOOD YEAR
3 AGENT X44
4 SHAOLIN VS EVIL DEAD
5 ROB-B-HOOD
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM CIY LIPA (043) 756-7925
1 A GOOD YEAR
2 ZU WARRIORS
3 AGENT X44
4 SPIRIT TRAP

SM CITY LUCENA (042)7108977-80
1 AGENT X44
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 SPIRIT TRAP
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

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2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 ERAGON
4 AGENT X44

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2 AGENT X44
3 SPIRIT TRAP
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

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1 ERAGON
2 SPIRIT TRAP
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 AGENT X44

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU (032)231-3876
1 DEJA VU
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 ERAGON
4 BLOOD DIAMOND
5 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
7 AGENT X44
8 SHAOLIN VS EVIL DEAD

SM CITY ILOILO (033)3209422
1 SHAOLIN VS EVIL DEAD
2 RESERVED
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 AGENT X44
5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
6 ERAGON
7 RESERVED
8 DEJA VU

SM CITY DAVAO (082)2976998
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 DECK THE HALLS
3 AGENT X44
4 ZU WARRIORS
5 ERAGON
6 DEJA VU

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2 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
3 AGENT X44
4 DEJA VU

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1 DEJA VU • THX
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
3 indieSine's Digital Cinema
Bagong Agos Film Festival
4 BABEL
1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00
5 LITTLE CHILDREN
1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00
6 ERAGON
12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00
7 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
12:40 2:55
8 SAW 3 12:00 2:20 4:40
BLOOD DIAMOND 7:00 10:00
9 ROB-B-HOOD
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
10 AGENT X44
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
2 ROB-B-HOOD 12:00 2:50
SAW 3 5:20 7:35 9:50
3 BABEL
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
4 DEJA VU
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00
5 LITTLE CHILDREN
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
6 AGENT X44
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00
7 BLOOD DIAMOND 12:00 2:40
ERAGON 5:30 7:45 10:00

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 ROB-B-HOOD
1:10 3:40 6:20 9:00
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
1:15 3:50 6:25 9:00
3 AGENT X44
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10
4 DEJA VU
12:45 3:30 6:15 9:00
5 SAW 3
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00
6 LITTLE CHILDREN
12:00 3:00 6:00 9:00
7 ERAGON
12:00 2:15 4:30 6:45 9:00
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
1:40 4:10 6:40 9:10

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 DEJA VU
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 AGENT X44
4 SAW 3

PIONEER 687-5378

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
1:15 3:45 6:15 8:40
2 BABEL
11:40 2:30 5:20 8:10
3 AGENT X44
1:40 4:00 6:20 8:40
4 LITTLE CHILDREN
11:40 2:30 5:20 8:10

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4 KAMASUTRA 3
5 AGENT X44

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1 ZU WARRIORS
2 AGENT X44
3 A GOOD YEAR
4 SPIRIT TRAP
5 SAW 3

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1 AGENT X44
2 KAMASUTRA 3
3 SAW 3
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

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1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 AGENT X44
3 KAMASUTRA 3
4 A GOOD YEAR

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1 DEJA VU
2 SAW 3
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 AGENT X44

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1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 KAMASUTRA 3
3 AGENT X44
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 SAW 3
6 A GOOD YEAR

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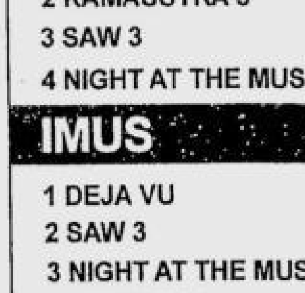
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
3 AGENT X44
4 DEJA VU
5 BORAT
6 SAW 3

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 AGENT X44
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
4 DEJA VU
5 BORAT
6 SAW 3



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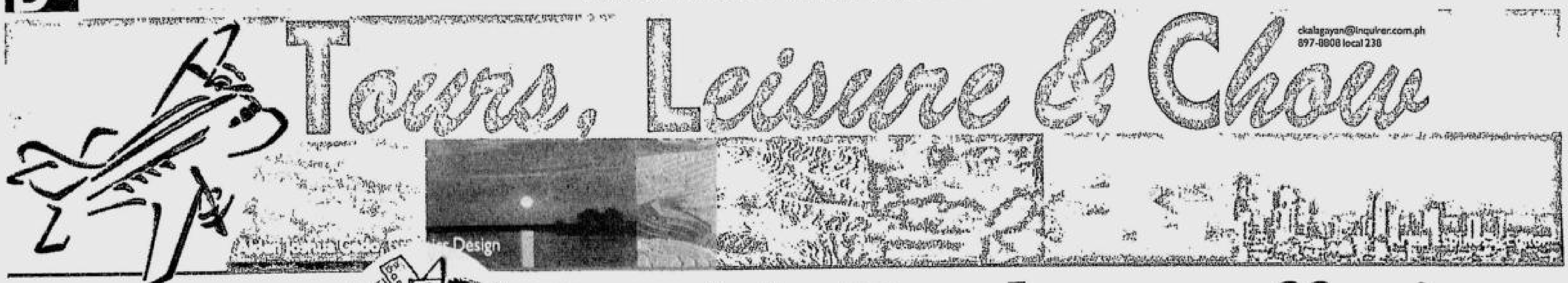

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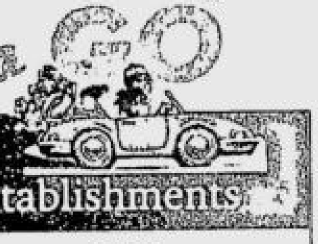

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Tel. :(074) 446.0560, 446.5400-01
www.SummerPlaceBaguio.com

Taal Vista Hotel
Managed by Fuego Hotels & Properties
Km. 60 Aguinaldo Highway, Tagaytay City
Tel. (632) 886-4325, (6346) 413-1000
Email : taalvista@fuegohotels.com

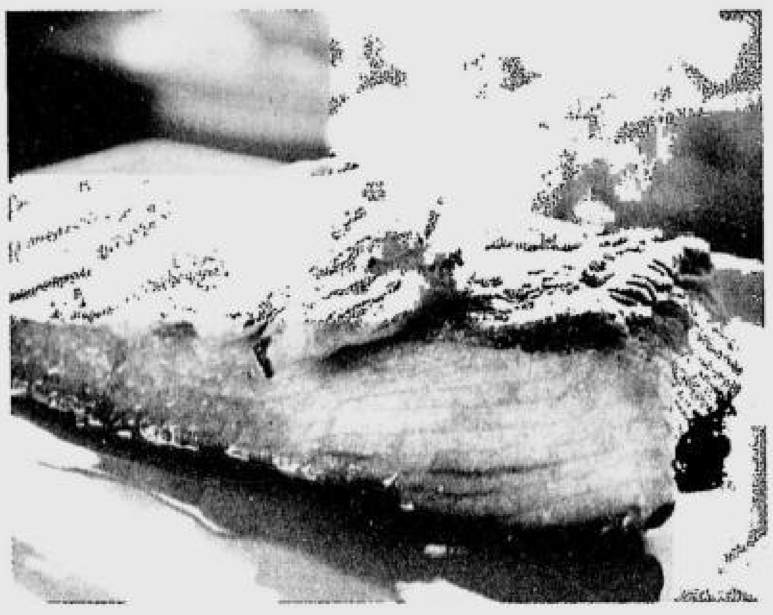
The Marco Polo
CM Recto St. Davao City 8000
Tel. (082) 221-0888/fax (082) 225-0111
www.marcopolohotels.com

Manila Pavilion
United Nations Ave., cor. Ma. Orosa Orosa St., Manila
Tel. 526-1212 / Fax: 526-2552
www.manilapavilion.com.ph

Waterfront Hotel Lahug
1 Salinas Drive, Lahug Cebu City
Tel. (6332) 232-6888/Fax (6332)232-6880
www.waterfronthotels.net

Waterfront Hotel Mactan
1 Airport Road, Lapu Lapu City, 6015
Tel. (632) 340-4888/fax (632) 340-5693
www.waterfronthotels.net

Dusit's Benkay- offering new Japanese feasts



FOOD LOVERS HAVE ANOTHER reason to visit Benkay with the its new "Japanese Set Menus" offered for lunch and dinner. The new set menus vary every day of the week. This is actually an advantage for diners since they are afforded with more Japanese cuisine to choose from depending on their liking or the recommendation of Benkay's amiable staff. Benkay's new "Japanese Set Menu" offerings consist of an appetizer, soup, salad, choice of main course, rice or noodles and dessert all for the indulgence for only P550 nett per person.

Throughout the years, Benkay has been celebrated for its well-loved and authentic Japanese cuisine and has created a loyal following both locally and internationally. Benkay's inspiration has always been reflected in its devotion to serve its patrons with the finest cuisine of Japan. Chef Yoshiaki Tomiyama, who masterfully prepared Benkay's newest set menu offerings, assured that this legacy is followed. "Each item we offer are prepared with every effort to delight our guests every time they visit Benkay" exclaimed Chef Tomiyama. "It is our mission to 'preserve the essence of Japanese cuisine' for our guest's satisfaction" he added.

Benkay is located at the lobby level and is open daily for lunch, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and for dinner, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. For inquiries, call the restaurant manager at 867-3333 extension 3343. Advance dining reservation is advised.

G Hotel Manila by Waterfront backed by Filipino excellence

RECENTLY, G HOTEL MANILA BY Waterfront opened its doors to the public to allow them to experience another Waterfront excellence in the heart of Manila. Two months preparation was all it took for the corporate management group of Waterfront Philippines Inc to open another hotel concept in the country. G hotel is a great example of a boutique hotel, which has gathered a large following in developed countries. Boutique hotels differentiate themselves from other conventional hotels based on the smallness of the property, but focusing on the unique brand offering where, for G Hotel Manila it is the 24-hour personalized butler service.

G is for great balance of style and substance that the property showcases in its very chic black and white lobby. Everybody was awed when they entered G during its launching Nov. 17, 2006. G's lobby was adorned in black and white from the doors to Café Noir, the hotel's coffee shop, to the last step before they entered the elevators.

As the guests stepped out at the seventh floor where the main event was about to happen, they were welcomed by a dusk of gold in the Promenade, the hotel's ball room, with a grand view of the night sky overlooking the Manila Bay.

Rxlon Gatchalian, president of Waterfront Philippines Inc, introduced the new hotel concept in the heart of Manila.

When asked how it was possible for a new first-class hotel concept to be opened on so short a preparation, Yuri Mangondaya, hotel manager of G, replied, "It was never that hard for us, since G has been backed by the concept team of Waterfront Hotels and Casinos, which basically comprised of all the corporate officers. All of them are Filipinos except for the group executive chef."

The butler training seemed hard at first, but with the help of peers resources and development division headed by Gaye Maureen Cenabre, director of PRDD, and Agnes Lucente, group training manager, the Club Ambassador concept and service orientation of Waterfront was transferred to G.

"It was just like as if we were running another Waterfront Hotel, but this time only consisting of 50 rooms," Mangondaya explained."

For inquiries and reservations, call 525-0888, 687-0888 or e-mail msro@waterfronthotels.net, g.hotel@waterfronthotels.net .

New residence manager for Somerset Salcedo

SOMERSET SERVICED RESIDENCE'S AREA GENeral manager Arthur Gindap announces the appointment of Jobel Ramos as the new residence manager of Somerset Salcedo Makati. Ramos graduated with a history and political science degree from De La Salle University before he joined the hospitality industry back in 1984. Culling professional experience in guest services operations from various five star international hotels. He is also being recognized as an elder of the prestigious "Les clefs d' Or Philippines", an international organization of hotel concierges in the world. In 2000, Ramos joined Somerset as the assistant operations manager of Somerset Millennium Makati prior to his promotion as the new residence manager of Somerset Salcedo Makati. With Ramos at the forefront, he aims to open new doors by continually enhancing the product and service level of the company. Committed to deliver true service from the heart and going the extra mile for each guest at Somerset Salcedo Makati. For more information on Somerset Serviced Residence Philippines, call Cristina Ong-Cruz or Vanessa Calimlim at 888-0531; e-mail cristina.cruz@the-ascott.com or vanessa.calimlim@the-ascott.com, or visit www.the-ascott.com

Superb Holiday at Quantum Resorts in Subic

FROM THE RENOWNED PROPERTY management team of Quantum Hotels & Resorts comes another gem in leisure and recreation estates. Strategically located at the heart of the Subic Bay Freeport Zone, the Italian-inspired Subic Holiday Villas is a five-minute drive to the industrial zone, and is 15 minutes away from the beaches of Subic, as well as its entertainment areas and tourist destinations.

Subic Holiday Villas offers a wide variety of fully furnished rooms— from studio units to one-bedroom and two-bedroom suites. The suites extend to balconies, while the kitchens are ready with refrigerator, stove, microwave/toaster oven, glassware, cutlery and crockery. Each unit is equipped with cable network television, individually controlled air-conditioning, and hot and cold water in the elegantly tiled bathrooms.

Guests at the Subic Holiday Villas can enjoy facilities for rest and relaxation such as the tropical swimming pool and wading pool in the fountain area, a fitness center, and walking and jogging path. As a convention site, Subic Holiday Villas provide conference areas, along with indoor and outdoor function rooms.

Other Quantum Hotels & Resorts properties strategically located in the Central Business District of Makati include BSA Tower, BSA Suites, and the Perla Mansion. For more information and bookings, call Quantum Hotels & Resorts at 864-0941 or e-mail sales@quantumsuites.com or reservations@quantumsuites.com.

People, Events & Products

Start the year right with Hopia Mongo Lite

MOST OF US WELCOME THE NEW Year with long lists of New Year's resolutions. Topping these goals is the resolution to shed off those unwanted belly and pounds and eventually start living a healthier lifestyle.

More often than not, shifting to a healthy lifestyle comes easier said than done. Many are encouraged during the start of the year but the passion eventually fades after some time. Exercise and dieting don't have to kill you, anyway. You don't have to be a gym-maniac to remove those bulges and develop the curves. A 10-minute walk to the work place will do. Dieting doesn't necessarily mean starving or depriving yourself of sumptuous food. It is just a matter of choices of food and intake moderation.

After the Christmas season, the all-time favorite hopia is one of those gifts we undeniably can't resist. Rather than depriving ourselves from the good old Chinese delicacy that we Filipinos love, Gerry Chua, Eng Bee Tin's general manager, offers a wholesome product not only for diabetic patients but for those who want to remove the unwanted fats but still crave for the sweets.

Be one of the early birds to experience the oozing taste of Hopia Mongo Lite. This special hopia has a low glycemic index; hence its sugar content is low and is suitable for diabetics and figure-conscious hopia lovers. With the carefully studied composition of the Hopia Lite, everyone can savor the classic taste of Filipino's all-time favorite treat, filled with smooth mung bean and sesame seeds.

Another exciting and guilt-free innovation from Chua is how their products are cooked. "Traditionally, hopia is cooked using fatty oils. When I took over Eng Bee Tin, I decided to use a healthier alternative-corn oil. These small changes make a big difference for the health of our customers," Chua reveals.

"Eng Bee Tin's concern is more than the satisfaction of our customers, we value their health. Cheers for the new Hopia Mongo Lite! You can still enjoy your favorite hopia, without counting the calories!" says Chua.

Eng Bee Tin is one of the country's most celebrated hopia makers. Guaranteed with goodness and freshness, surely, you won't settle for one bite. Eng Bee Tin products are locally available in various supermarkets, groceries, restaurants, offices and school canteens. The company is also one of the biggest international exporters of hopia, delivering to Asia, the Middle East, Europe and the United States.

The muffin has come a long way

SPECIALTY BREADS AND PASTRIES CONTINUE TO ENrich the breakfast fare of Filipinos. The wide range of choices now available in the market has also opened a whole new world of taste and exposed the local palate to breakfast traditions from the West. Travel and exposure to dining options have also made the Pinoy more adventurous and cosmopolitan in his eating habits. The continental breakfast with specialty breads, jam and fruit is now familiar. So is English tea time with its tiny cakes and pastries, translated by Pinoys as *merienda*. A common item in these dining traditions is the muffin. In America, the first muffin store was set up in downtown Chicago. Just like the English, Americans instantly took to the muffin. In the Philippines, muffins are regular fare in specialty bakeshops in malls, hotel coffee shops, restaurants, and doughnut shops. Placed alongside other specialty breads and pastries, they are often upscale and relatively expensive. This is why Gardenia, known for producing high-quality and delectable breads, moves another step forward with the introduction of its muffins. Gardenia Muffins are made in the American tradition. For a fruity and tangy taste, there's the blueberry muffin, the corn muffin with its natural sweet flavor is for corn fanatics, and for the chocoholic, there's the ultimate flavorful chocolate muffin. All bursting with mouth-watering flavors that are sure to appeal to the Filipino's sweet tooth! Gardenia Muffins are also great with a cup of coffee or tea. And since it comes in packs of three, it's one filling snack ideal to share with a loved one, be it for breakfast or snacks, or as a fitting dessert after a sumptuous meal.

Great time to go to the movies

By Nestor U. Torre

FANNING topbills film version of the popular children's tale, "Charlotte's Web."

FERRELL. A life told in fiction.

FILM BUFFS SHOULDN'T PASS UP THE opportunity to view some outstanding movies in the next couple of weeks: "Charlotte's Web" stars the precocious Dakota Fanning and the currently much-missed Julia Roberts in an inspired retelling of the much-loved children's tale.

The movie also features a merry menagerie of talking farm animals, plus surprising vocal performances from the unexpected likes of Robert Redford and Oprah Winfrey.

"Babel" has just won the best picture award at the Golden Globes, and been nominated in the same category in the 2006 Oscars, so it's a must-see. Which is not to say that it's going to be an easy view, since the movie works at different levels and pulls in contrasting events and points of view. The fact that its stellar cast includes Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett helps, however.

Dark drama

Todd Field's "Little Children" topbills new Oscar nominee Kate Winslet, and combines dark drama and humor.

In "Stranger Than Fiction," Will Ferrell's character discovers that his life is being written by a novelist played by Emma Thompson. —Hey, whose life is it, anyway?!

"Blood Diamond" is still showing, and its current run has been enhanced by just-in Oscar news that its two main actors, Leonardo DiCaprio and Djimon Hounsou, have been nominated as best actor and best supporting actor, respectively.

"The History Boys" opens on Feb. 7 and runs exclusively at Greenbelt 3 and Glorietta 4. The film, which is based on an acclaimed stage play, takes place in a grammar school in England during the '80s.

It's about a group of feisty young men preparing for their entrance examinations to Oxford and Cambridge with the help of three very differently-driven teachers.

Awards

The play won a number of Olivier awards during its London run before copping a record six Tony awards after moving on to Broadway. The film is directed by its stage director, Nicholas Hytner, and is acted by its original theater cast.

Mel Gibson's "Apocalypto" brings darkly and violently to life Mel Gibson's seminal view of the distant past, during the Mayan empire's acme and apotheosis.

In radical contrast, "Music and Lyrics" is much brighter and lighter, but it's viewable in its own right because it tells the disarming story of two thoroughly mismatched people (played by Hugh Grant and Drew Barrymore) who fall in love on wings of song. Grant's on-target portrayal of a washed-up '80s pop star is worth the price of admission.

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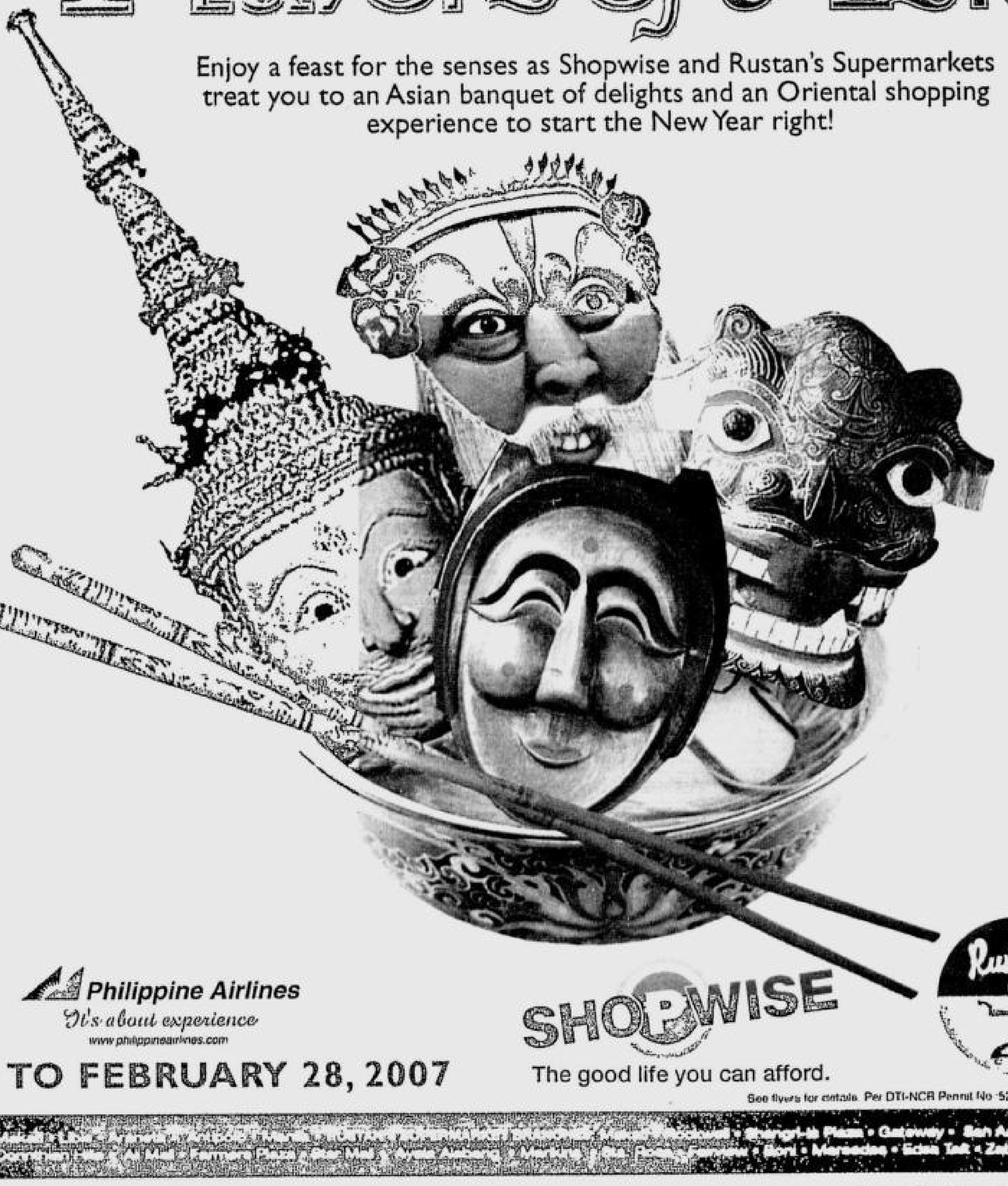
Enjoy a feast for the senses as Shopwise and Rustan's Supermarkets treat you to an Asian banquet of delights and an Oriental shopping experience to start the New Year right!



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WOLFGANG
volume

The immortality of Wolfgang

By Marlet D. Salazar
Photos by Jim Guiao

"It's as if they never left."

This quick observation from a fan best articulates the overwhelming reception to one of the country's most influential bands during the two-night sold-out concerts at the Music Museum.

Wolfgang "howled" with their signature songs—and more—pumping life once again to loyal fans who have been dying to see them play. And they did not disappoint. The music and the icons proved to be immortals.

Lead guitarist Manuel Legarda, along with Razorback guitarist Tirso Ripoll, took advantage of the two fellow band members' brief visit to Manila during the holidays and organized the event with help from some friends. Wolfgang frontman Basti Artadi is based in the United States, while bassist Mon Legaspi works in Hong Kong.

"Absolute joy," is how Basti describes the smile on their faces upon seeing that the cult following has remained faithful to their music.

"It makes me feel good to know that the people are still interested in what we are doing," he said. "It's nice to play with these guys that I haven't played with for so long and that's one of the best feelings."

"It was pleasantly surprising that we got that response because we didn't know where we stood with the fans," Manuel said.

However, ace drummer Wolf Gemora is currently on tour with his new band and was unable to take part in the reunion concert.

Wolfgang, a nonconformist heavy metal-hard rock-grunge band, started to make good music together in 1992. At the turn of the millennium, the music genre in the country had shifted to R&B, and music piracy became rampant. The band was not spared.

With the US market in mind, they decided to try their luck. But the tides did not turn their way and they found themselves doing their own thing. Conflicting reports spread but the band wants to clarify that there has been no bad blood between them and the plan just didn't happen.

The biggest blow for the fans which kept them holding on to their seats was when Basti announced in June last year that he would be retiring from the music industry. Based on the replies in forums and e-groups, the fans seemed like they were faced with a death of a loved one.

Welcome surprise

"Alive 2007: The Wolfgang-Razorback Reunion Concert" was not only a treat for the legion of fans; it somewhat spewed speculations that they were testing the waters and were seriously considering a major comeback.

So, are the fans right to keep their hopes up?

"We are back making music and we are currently working on an album," Manuel said.

But Basti was quick to add: "But it is not like we are thinking of being on a tour."

In fact, they are not even looking for a new drummer.

Manuel, who now works as an arranger for Hit Productions, came up with several compositions which he works on during breaks from doing commercial jingles. He sent one material to Basti, and it sounded good when the frontman sang it.

Manuel sent another one and the master of metaphors laid out the lyrics. Basti, for his part, sent his own material, and the guitarist quickly put music on it.

"You know how it is like in a garage together with your friends and write songs without any intention of having anybody hear it," Basti said.

The momentum just kept building up and the next thing the two musicians knew they had three-and-a-half songs.

"It's there but needs a lot of work," Basti said. "The good thing about how we're doing this is we don't have anybody over us pressuring us. We just work on it until we feel that it's time."

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Manuel would like to have the album done by the end of the year, "but if it's not ready, it's not ready. It's not going to come out."

Recognizing that writing music over the Internet works, they both agreed to come up with an album.

"This is something we couldn't do three years ago," Manuel said, "but now that we see that it can be done, we'll do it."

Catching the wave

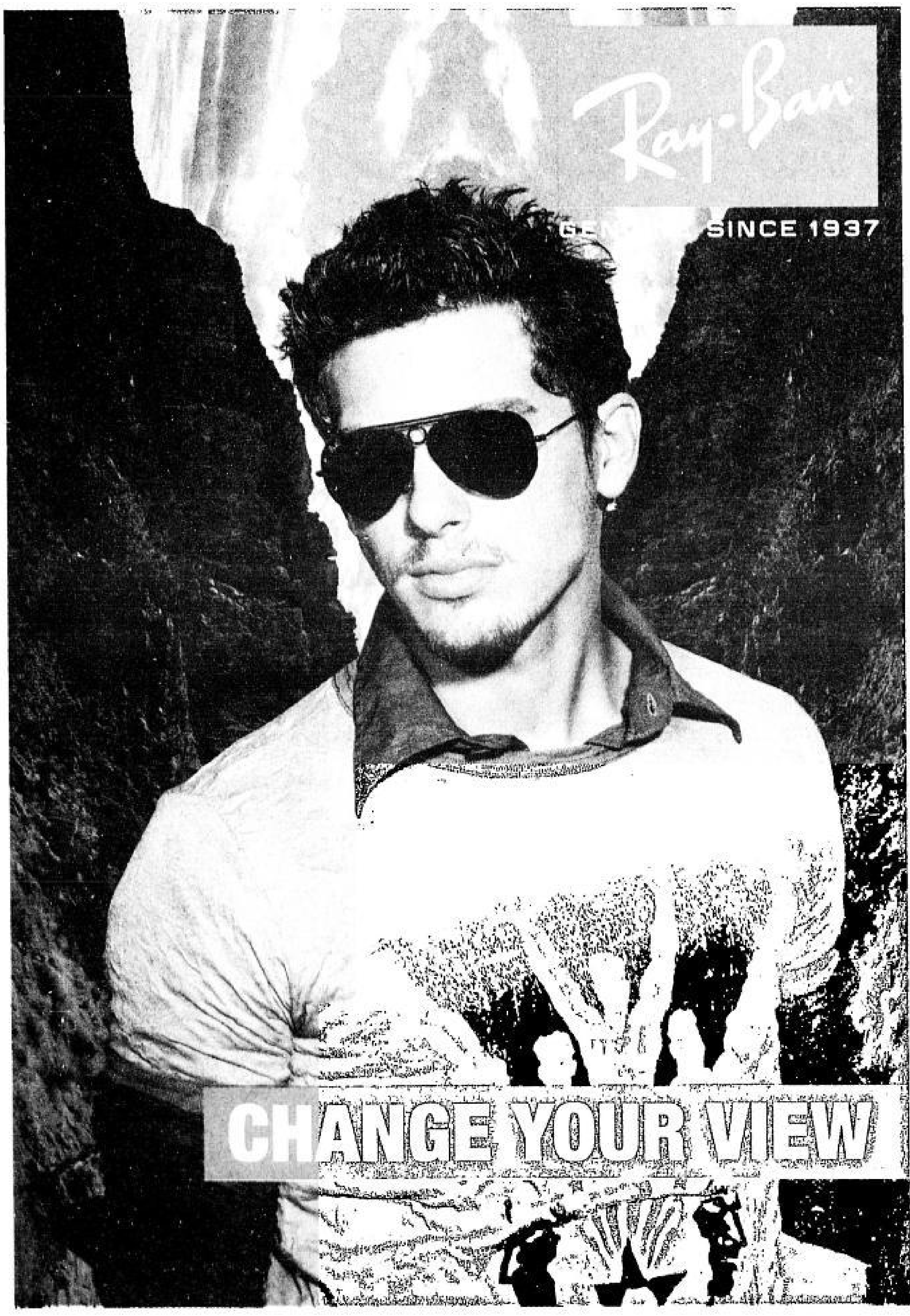
Bands these days are everywhere. The rock music scene is enjoying the cycle. Every minute a baby is born, and every second, one band pops out from nowhere.

The new generation hasn't seen the "real thing." Pseudo-rock bands that classify their screaming and noise as rock are in for a lesson or two.

The multi-awarded band is known for its hard-hitting, loud, grunge sound, angsty lyrics, cemented by Basti's raspy voice. Will the Wolfgang stamp still be evident in the album?

"Deathsquad is a natural evolution," Manuel explained. "It's good that people still identify the song as a Wolfgang song. But at the same time, I think there are

WOLFGANG/ E3



meeting the icons

ON HIS BRIEF VISIT TO MANILA, BASTI Artadi gave a taste of the new music of Wolfgang to adoring fans and supporters. The two-night sold-out concert at the Music Museum renewed great interest in the band's music.

People have been talking of a supposed major comeback, and an album in the works. The latter has truth in it, although there is no definite date as to when fans can enjoy the new music of Wolfgang.

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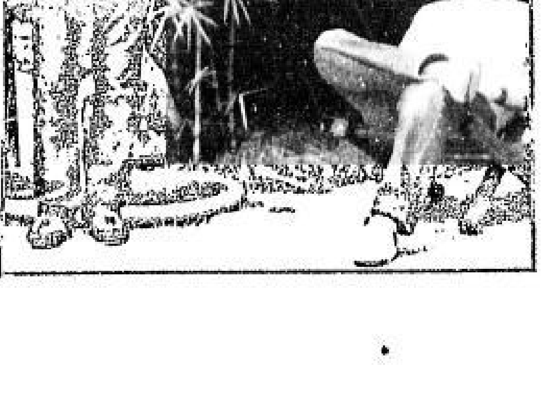
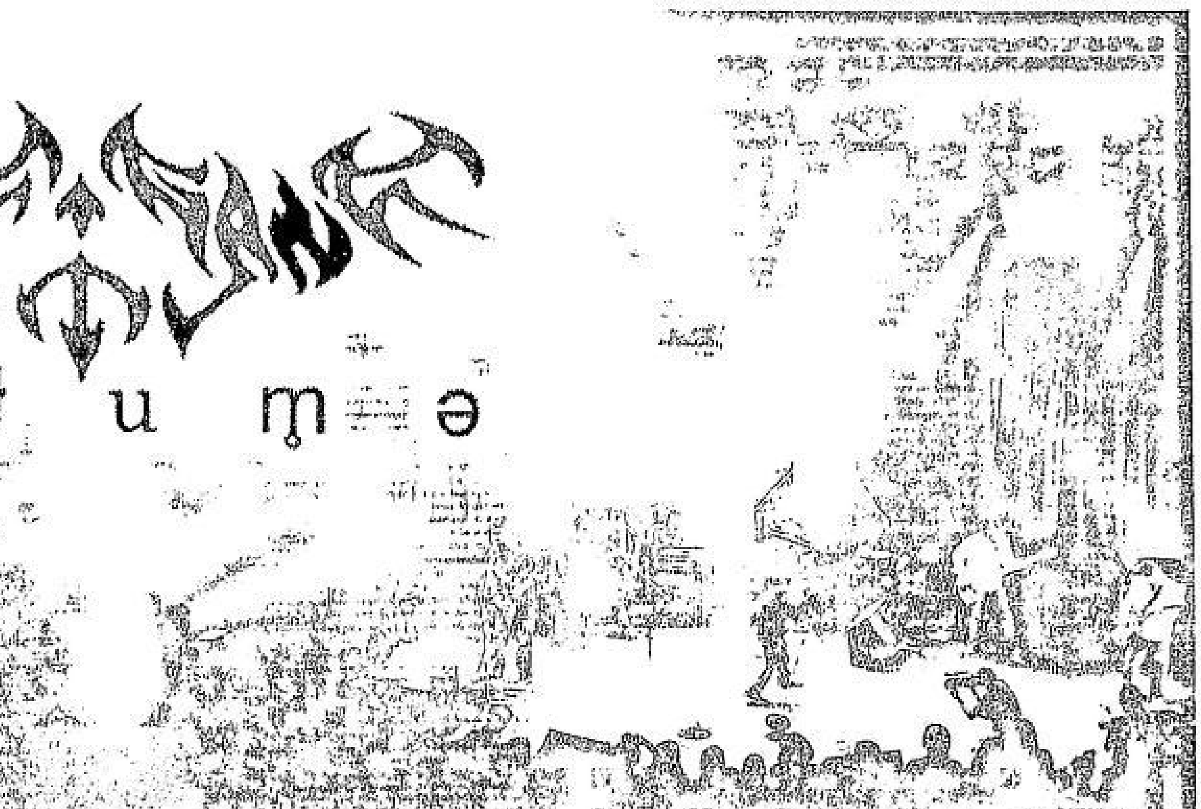
The soft-spoken Basti felt like he had not been away that long because the familiarity of the people with their music didn't wane one bit.

Incessant praises for their first concert with Razorback are heard from supporters.

The two also met with the representatives of Ray-Ban, Izod, and Van Heusen at the Makati office in early January.

According to Basti and Manuel, they used to be backed by a jeans company during the early years of their career.





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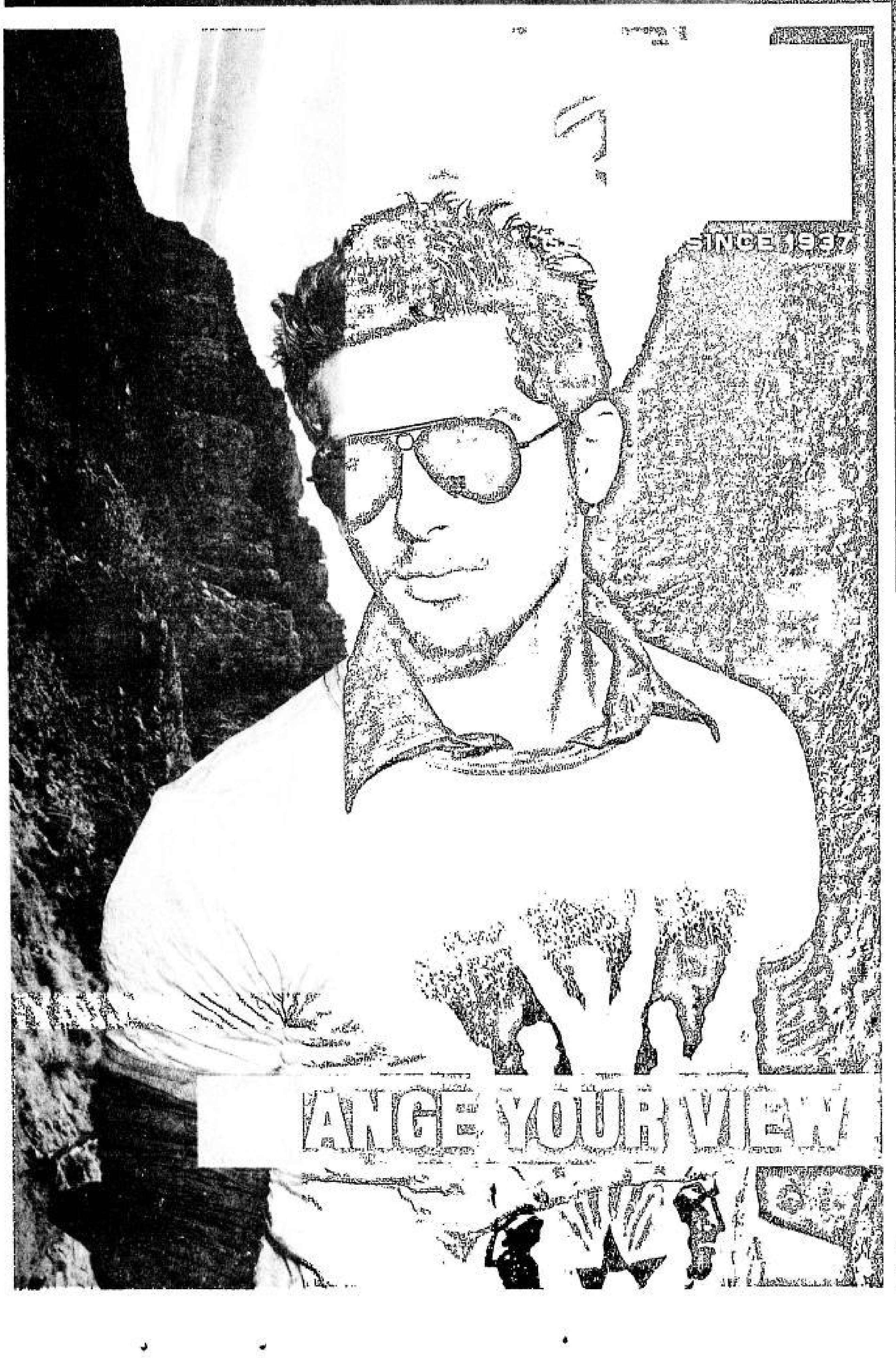

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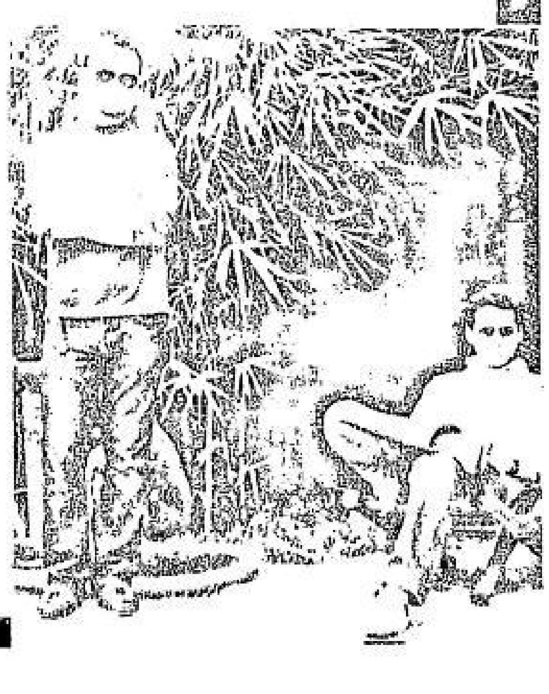


RETAKE OF PRECEDING FRAME

The immortality of Wolfgang

From page E2

some differences with the music now than from before. I'm not sure if I can pinpoint what exactly it is, but definitely it has changed."

The people who managed to attend the two shows got a peek of what's in store with the new song "RP Death Squad." The result is a burning craving for blood-thirsty Wolfgang fans.

"I think it's not the same," Basti said. "It's still heavy and fast but it's like where we would have gone if we decided to make an album right after Black Mantra."

With five best-selling albums in their 15-year career, it is only the natural next step. Not a step back. It's a step forward.

"I'd like to believe that we are still a heavy rock band," Manuel said.

But the guys are not about to conform to what is popular or what is selling.

"What I can really be proud of is that I can look at our catalogue and there's not one album that I will be ashamed of," Basti said. "Every time we put something out, it's something that we were all excited about."

And it's true. Their work speaks for themselves.

Not sharp enough?

Basti will always have it, most fans swear. Disenchanted by the elusive "holy grail," the most popular vocalist was prompted to say in his "farewell" post that his knives were not long or sharp enough.

"I was talking about the music industry itself," he said. "Playing in front of people is very easy to deal with. It is what's going on behind the scene that kind of frustrates me.

"Just trying to chase that holy grail, that dream, that's constantly dangled in front of you and every time you try to get it somebody just tugs it further away."

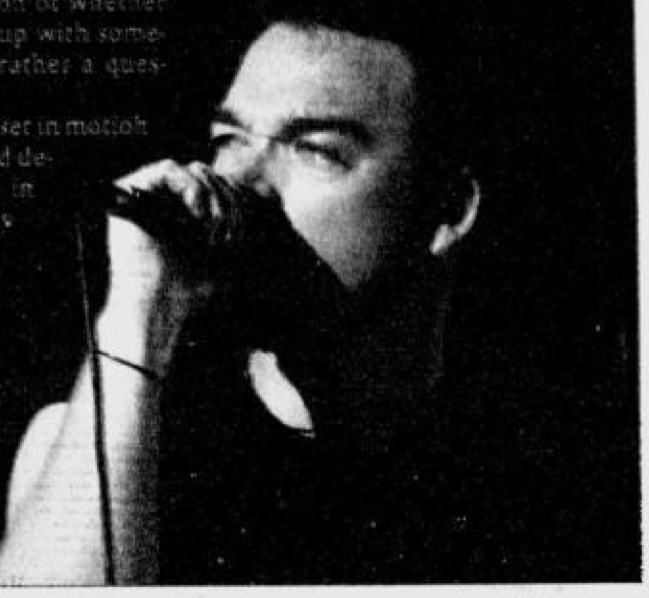
Still, it didn't stop him from making what he does and likes doing best.

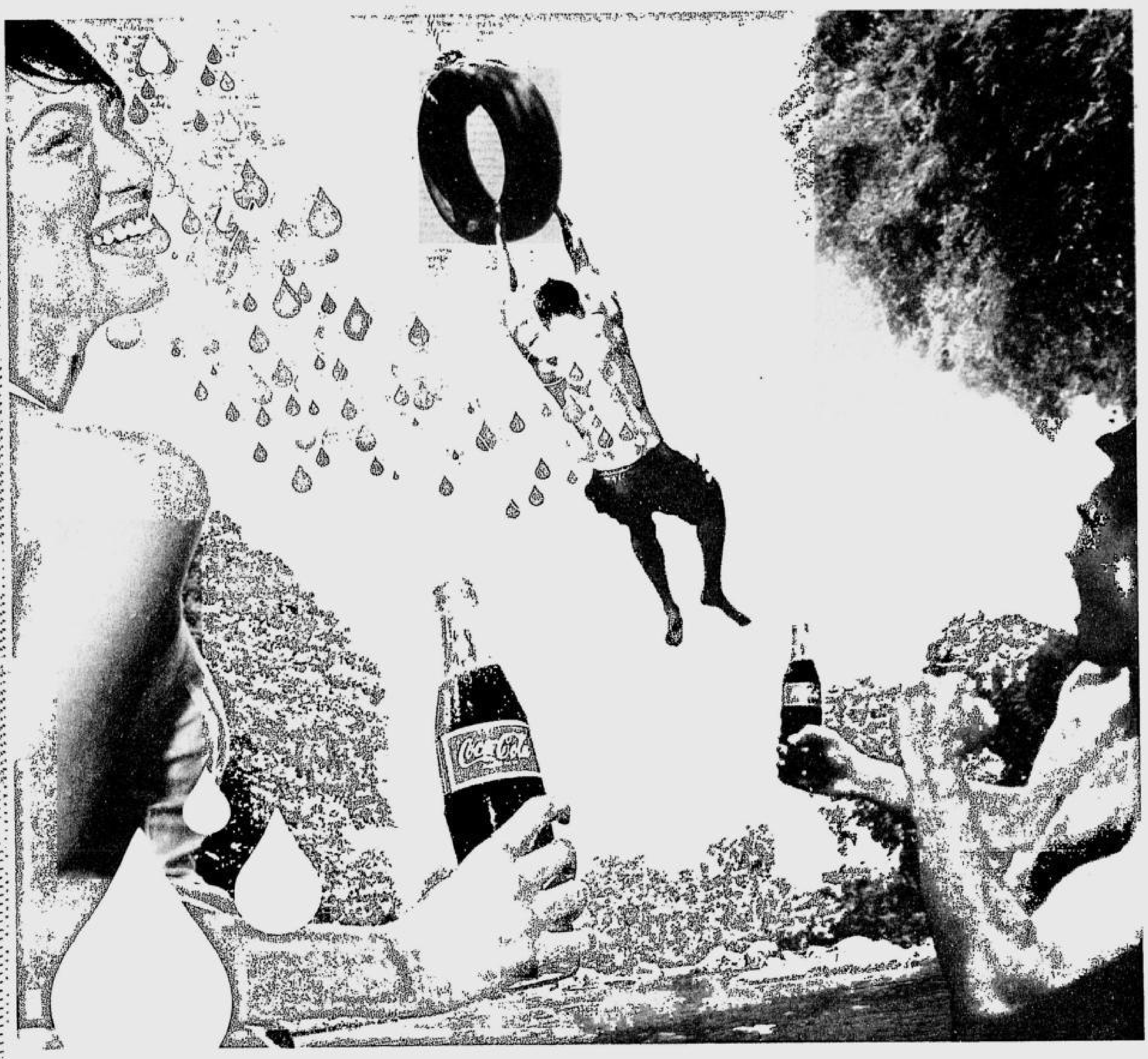
Because the reunion concert was just a spur-of-the-moment gathering, Basti and Manuel are still careful on what the next step would be.

Families and work are still priorities; they want to set it straight. The music thing is there to give them the thrills. Basti is taking up his masters in Advertising in the States, Manuel is awaiting the first-born, and Mon has been doing well in Hong Kong.

"We are not done yet," Manuel said. "It's not a question of whether we are going to come up with something new again, but rather a question of when."

Everything has been set in motion for the band that helped define heavy rock music in the country. Eventually something will come out, hopefully soon.





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A SMILE IN EVERY DROP

There aren't any studies to prove that drinking Coke will lengthen your life. But we all know that happiness makes you live longer. That's why we put a smile in every Coke you drink and share. So have a Coke and a smile.

We at The Coca-Cola Company think that happiness is like a bottle of Coke. You can't share it with somebody without having some for yourself. That's why you and every one close to you cherish the time-loved taste of Coke, drop by drop. We made Coke to make you smile, and to us every smile counts.

*Mary Pettibone Poole

EVERYONE DESERVES A SMILE

They say that happiness brings better health and helps you live longer. That is why we put a smile in every bottle of Coca-Cola. So every time you open one, you get that one-of-a-kind feeling that lifts your spirit and refreshes your body and soul. Nothing compares with a Coke in hand. So sit back, kick off your shoes, grab a Coke and savor life's every drop. Stay happy.

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The Coca-Cola Company
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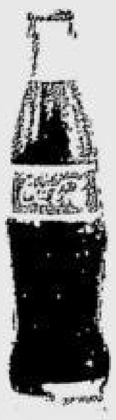

The Coca-Cola Company
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The immortality of Wolfgang

From page E2

some differences with the music now than from before. I'm not sure if I can pinpoint what exactly it is, but definitely it has changed."

The people who managed to attend the two shows got a peek of what's in store with the new song "RP Death Squad." The result is a burning craving for blood-thirsty Wolfgang fans.

"I think it's not the same," Basti said. "It's still heavy and fast but it's like where we would have gone if we decided to make an album right after Black Mantra."

With five best-selling albums in their 15-year career, it is only the natural next step. Not a step back. It's a step forward.

"I'd like to believe that we are still a heavy rock band," Manuel said.

But the guys are not about to conform to what is popular or what is selling.

"What I can really be proud of is that I can look at our catalogue and there's not one album that I will be ashamed of," Basti said. "Every time we put something out, it's something that we were all excited about."

And it's true. Their work speaks for themselves.

Not sharp enough?

Basti will always have it, most fans swear. Disenchanted by the elusive "holy grail," the most popular vocalist was prompted to say in his "farewell" post that his knives were not long or sharp enough.

"I was talking about the music industry itself," he said. "Playing in front of people is very easy to deal with. It is what's going on behind the scene that kind of frustrates me.

"Just trying to chase that holy grail, that dream, that's constantly dangled in front of you and every time you try to get it somebody just tugs it further away."

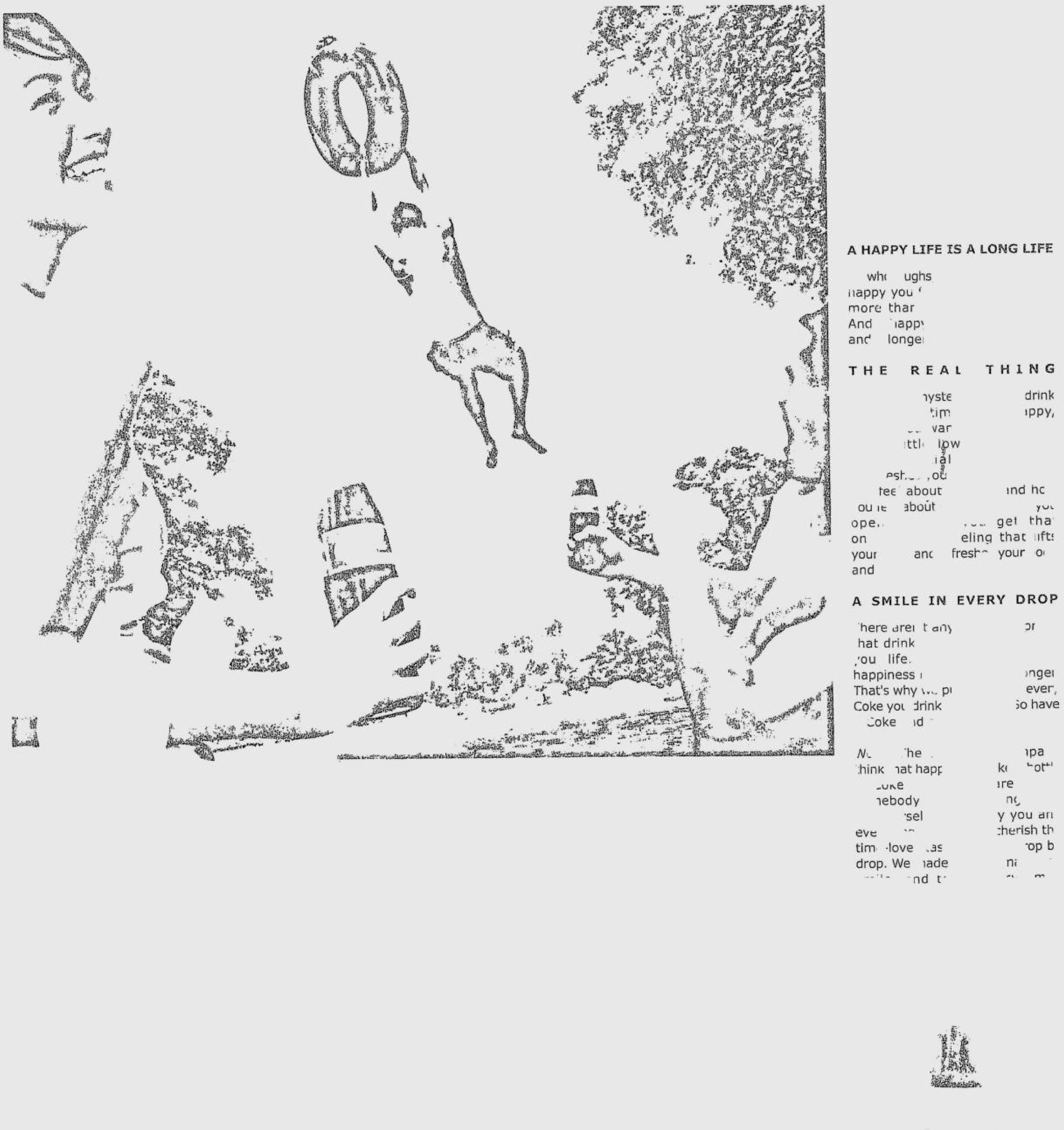
Still, it didn't stop him from making what he does and likes doing best.

Because the reunion concert was just a spur-of-the-moment gathering, Basti and Manuel are still careful on what the next step would be.

Families and work are still priorities; they want to set it straight. The music thing is there to give them the thrills. Basti is taking up his masters in Advertising in the States, Manuel is awaiting the first-born, and Mon has been doing well in Hong Kong.

"We are not done yet," Manuel said. "It's not a question of whether we are going to come up with something new again, but rather a question of when."

Everything has been set in motion for the band that helped define heavy rock music in the country. Eventually something will come out, hopefully soon.



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RETAKE OF PRECEDING FRAME

MONTAGE

LOVE'S TRANSFORMATIVE POWER IS VIVIfied in must-see movies next month on the Hallmark Channel: "Love's Long Journey" leads off at 10 p.m. on Feb.12, with its inspiring story about prairie couple Missie and Willie, who head west to start a family of their own. Replay at 7 p.m on Feb. 18.

"For One Night" (10 p.m. on Feb. 13) dramatizes a teenager's (Raven Symoné) courageous move to defy her town's ingrained prejudice by campaigning for a racially integrated high school prom.

"Falling in Love with the Girl Next Door" (Feb. 14 at 10 p.m.) is about a wedding that is threatened by decades-long rivalry between the mothers (Patty Duke and Shelley Long) of the bride and groom.

"See Jane Date" (Feb. 14, 2 a.m.) is about a single gal who creates a nonexistent but perfect boyfriend. "Returning Lily" (Feb. 15, 2 a.m.) tells a compelling story of a woman's (Virginia Madsen) efforts to rediscover the meaning of life.

SYMONÉ. Topbills the Hallmark drama, "For One Night."

In "Coast to Coast," marital wounds are opened as spouses travel together to attend their son's wedding. And "Straight from the Heart" (Feb. 15, 6 a.m.) is about a mismatched man and woman brought together by a dating service.

Sun Cellular in Davao

Sun Cellular recently visited Davao City to showcase its increased network capacity and expanded reach, which enable its subscribers to enjoy more texts and calls. To add to the excitement, Iya Villania, Jay-R and 6CycleMind and Brownman Revival performed in a mini-concert. Lots of prizes and freebies including five Sun Cellular Prepaid phonekits were given away to lucky subscribers.

Sun Cellular invests $200 million yearly for network expansion and upgrade, putting up additional cell sites in locations outside major urban centers offering services like the 24/7 Call and Text Unlimited, 24/7 Text Unlimited with Voice Calls, Sulit Calls, Top 10 IDD and Sun Messenger. Call 395-8000, or visit www.suncellular.com.ph.

Nickelodeon marks Year of the Pig

Premiering on TeeNick on Feb. 5, right after "Drake & Josh," is "Mr. Meaty"—welcome to fast-food hell! Joshua and Parker are in charge here, and what they lack in customer service, they more than make up for in imagination!

Say "Hello, Cupid!" on Feb. 14 and enjoy two hours of love-oriented episodes of fave shows like "My Life as A Robot" at 5:30 p.m., "Hey Arnold!" at 6 p.m., "As Told by Ginger" at 6:30 p.m., and "The Fairly Odd Parents" at 7 p.m.

Finally, greet the Chinese New Year on Feb. 18 with "Miss Spider Special" at noon,. "Hey Arnold!" at 1 p.m., and "The Angry Beavers" at 2 p.m. On Feb. 19, catch "Rugrats—Pre-school Daze" at noon and "Dora the Explorer" at 12:30 p.m., followed by a "Pig-a-Thon" with "Catdog" at 1 p.m. and "Hey Arnold!" at 1:30 p.m.

Movies on TV

On HBO, today at 9 p.m., "War of the Worlds." Tomorrow at 7 p.m., "Back to the Future 3." Jan. 29 at 1:45 p.m., "Harlem Nights." Jan. 30 at 9 p.m., "ED TV." Jan. 31 at 11 p.m., "The River Wild." Feb. 1 at 9 p.m., "True Lies." Feb. 2 at 9 p.m., "Cry Freedom."

On Cinemax, today at 6:30 a.m., "Catch-22." Tomorrow at 11:35 a.m., "The Spitfire Grill." Jan 29 at 9 p.m., "Beyond Borders." Jan. 30 at 11 p.m., "Carlito's Way." Jan. 31 at 9 p.m., "The School of Rock." Feb. 1 at 6 a.m., "Bonnie and Clyde." Feb. 2 at 6:30 a.m., "All Quiet on the Western Front."

Roger Robinson

On Jan. 29 and 31, Roger Robinson of the UK-based performance poetry group Apples & Snakes will train performing artists. Call the British Council at 914-1011 to 14 ext. 130, or e-mail Susan Arcega@britishcouncil.org.ph.

Robinson's tour also includes a performance of "Venus Takes a Bite" at Conspiracy Garden Café on Jan. 30.

New haven for classic dishes

WORD OF MOUTH

Sandy Daza

I FIRST MET MARS REYES THROUGH COL. Eddie dela Cerna. Our destination was a tiny *carinderia* near the Cuneta Astrodome.

Joseph and Jaemark's owner welcomed us warmly. Every dish I tried was not only delicious, it was unique. The restaurant was frequented by celebrities, PBA players and the likes of the former PBA commissioner Jun Bernardino.

Two foodies

Commissioner Bernardino has moved on, and so has Mars. Recently, the two foodies decided to team up to revive what to me is the best *inihaw na panga ng* tuna and crispy *buntot* in the metropolis. I dropped by Jaemark's to visit friends and satisfy a craving.

Of course, I ordered *panga ng* tuna, crispy *buntot* and a few others. Mars' crispy *buntot*, which he concocted in 1993 and serves with crispy pata sauce, is like eating crispy pork *pata*. The fact that it's fish makes it healthier.

Notable

Mars' other notable gastronomic creations are *ginataang puso ng saging*, coco prawns, tuna *sisig*, catfish salad, and *sugpo* with *taba ng talanga* sauce. His *dalandan* shake is delicious. I likewise enjoyed his *manggang hilaw* with *ginisang bagoong*. The mangoes are green, sour and crunchy and, when dipped in his homemade *bagoong*, is perfect with *inihaw*.

You'll find Jaemarks on the second floor of the Petron Station complex on C5, Barangay Ususan, Diego Silang, Taguig City. Call 828-1061 or 828-1514.

Happy eating!

E-mail sandydaza@shaw.ca

Love rules

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② BABEL
MTRCB PG-13
12:35, 3:25, 6:15, 9:05

③ DÉJÀ VU
MTRCB PG-13
1:00, 7:20, 10:00

④ LITTLE CHILDREN
MTRCB R-18
1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 10:00

PREMIERE THEATRE
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
MTRCB GP
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R-18

CINEMA 4 BABEL
10:30 , 1:25 , 4:25
7:25 , 10:25
PG - 13

CINEMA 5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
11:10 , 2:00 , 4:50
7:40 , 10:30
GP

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MUSIC MUSEUM

Jan. 23 , 2007	Marissa Sanchez	8:30 PM
Feb. 02 & 03 , 2007	Piolo Pascual and Sam Milby	8:30 PM
Feb. 7 & 8 , 2007	Agot Isidro "Back to Basics"	8:30 PM
Feb 13 & 14 , 2007	Ogie Alcasid	8:00 PM

TEATRINO
PROMENADE GREENHILLS

EVERY MONDAY	DANCE NIGHT	7:00 PM
JAN. 23 , 30 , 2007	DYORDS KO PO	8:30 PM
JAN. 24, 2007	"PAKNERS" 9 Ball Celebrity Challenge	6:00 PM

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2:45, 5:35, 8:25, 11:05
PG-13

2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
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3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
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4 LITTLE CHILDREN
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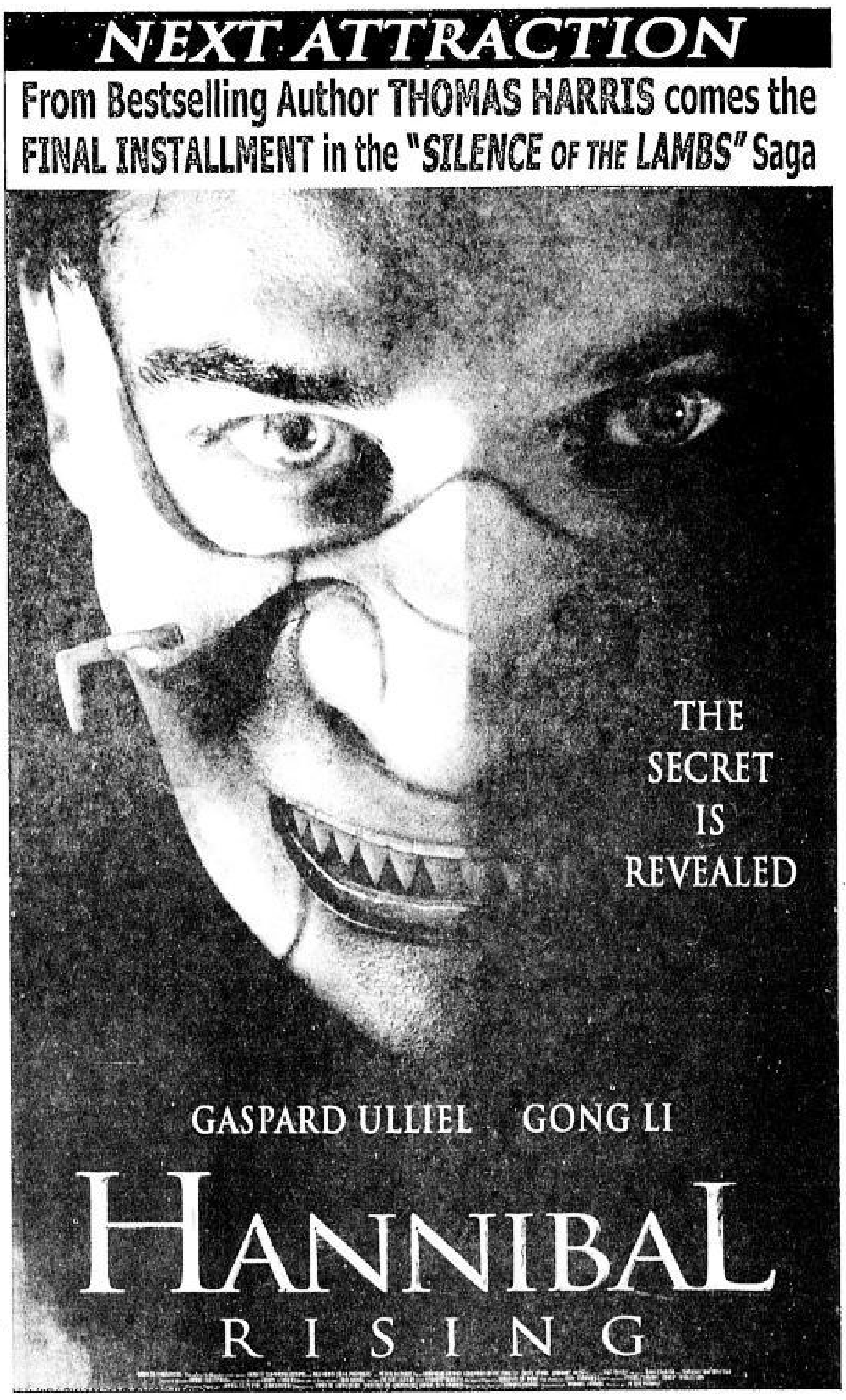
R-18



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DEJAVU
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